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How do teachers, counselors, and administrators describe their roles in working with English language learners?

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HOW DO TEACHERS, COUNSELORS, AND ADMMINISTRATORS DESCRIBE THEIR ROLES IN WORKNG WITH ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS?

by

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Dedications

This dissertation is dedicated to my daughter, Alyna Nicole Cabrera and son, Tyler Robert Cabrera for their endless supply of patience, encouragement, love and support. I love the two of you.

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Abstract

Myrtelina Martínez Cabrera
HOW DO TEACHERS, COUNSELOR, AND ADMINISTRATORS DESCRIBE THEIR ROLES IN WORKING WITH ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELLS)?
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The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine, through a social justice lens, how teachers, counselors and administrators describe their roles when working with English Language learners (ELLs). The study was conducted with four (N = 4) general education teachers ranging from grades 9-12, one ESL teacher (N = 1), one counselor (N = 1), and three administrators (N = 3) in one suburban school with a culturally and linguistically diverse student population. Qualitative data was collected through interviews. Results indicated that teachers lacked the necessary pedological skills and training to effectively instruct ELLs. Furthermore, the study revealed that current practices at the school and district level provided minimal supports and attention to ELLs. Drawing on the findings, the areas that demand attention include: the challenges faced by teachers; current school practices; and the types of supports teachers need. The study concludes with practical suggestions for serving ELLs, providing them with trained teachers and creating an inclusive environment that incorporates a fair and equitable educational experience for ELLs.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In recent years there has been a steady increase in the number of English language learners (ELLs) in U.S. public schools. According to the U.S. Department of Education, 4.85 million ELLs were enrolled in public schools during the 2012-13 academic year, representing 10% of the total K-12 student population (Ruiz Soto, Hooker, & Batalova, 2015). The percentage of public schools in the U.S. who enrolled ELLs was higher in 2012-2013 (9.2%) than in 2011-12 (9.1%) (The Condition of Education, 2015). Nationally, the English language learner student population is expected to grow significantly. The number of school-age children of immigrant families will increase from 12.3 million in 2005 and to an estimated 17.9 million in 2020 (Fry, 2008). A significant portion of these children will need some type of English as a second language services in schools. Moreover, by the year 2050 the population of the United States is projected to rise to 438 million (296 million to 438 million, an increase of 142 million or 48% growth between 2005 and 2050), of which 82% will be immigrants arriving between 2005 and 2050 and their U.S. born descendants. Of the 117 million added to the population during this period, 67 million will be immigrants and 50 million their U.S. born children and grandchildren. The increase in immigration creates numerous implications for English as second language programs in the public schools, educational policies and programs geared toward large immigrant groups (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016; Passel & Cohn, 2008). According to Hyland (2010) U.S. public schools will be largely

comprised of culturally and linguistically diverse groups. In addition, states that are not traditionally considered immigrant destinations states, such as, South Dakota, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Indiana have each experienced an increase in the number of English language learners (ELLs) (Goldenberg, 2008). California, New York, Florida, Illinois, and New Jersey serve approximately 54% of the ELL population (Migration Policy Institute, 2015).

ELLs are the fastest growing group of students in the country. The demographic shift in the United States, mostly due to immigration, has created a more ethnically and linguistically diverse student population (Iddings, Combs, & Moll, 2012) with reports of over 14 million language minority students (August & Shanahan, 2006). In U.S. public schools English language learners represent different national origins and speak over 400 different languages (García, Arias, Murri-Harris, & Serna, 2010). Most of these students (77%), reported Spanish as their primary language spoken at home, followed by speakers of Asian languages (e.g., Vietnamese, Hmong, Chinese, Korean, Khmer, Laotian, Hindi, and Tagalog) (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). The number of students entering public schools who will speak a language other than English is projected to increase in both rural and urban public schools in the United States (Hyland, 2010; Rodriguez, Manner, & Darcy, 2010). In U.S. schools, many ELLs spend about 60% of their day in all-English classes and about 12% of all ELLs receive no services or support at all related to meeting their language needs; and nearly 50% of all ELLs receive all-English instruction, but with some amount of services (Goldenberg, 2008).

Educating English Language Learners

One of the main questions on the minds of practitioners, as well as researchers, is how to best educate English language learners (ELLs) in U. S. schools (Peercy, 2011; Stufft & Brogadir, 2011). Moreover, the discrepancies in the academic achievement of ELLs compared to native English speakers is cause for concern among educators, and for educational policy and practice. Prior analyses by the Pew Hispanic Center of assessment data uniformly indicate that ELL students are less likely than native English speakers to score at or above proficient levels in both mathematics and reading/language arts (Fry, 2008). A significant challenge has risen at the secondary level where students are expected to meet the language and academic demands in mainstream classes (Peercy, 2011).

Moreover, statistical analyses reported by the National Center of Educational Statistics (NCES) (2010) confirm that the achievement gap continues to plague our school systems. In comparison to any other minority groups, Hispanics have the greatest history of dropout rates and low college completion. It is estimated that almost one in two Hispanic students currently drops out of high school. In many cases, the achievement gap is complicated by issues of limited English language proficiency for a significant number of Hispanic (Latino) students. According to U.S. census data 37, 857, 699 students enrolled in K-12 grades speak Spanish. Of those, 58% speak English “very well”, 17% speak English “well”, 16% speak English “not well”, and 8% speak English “not at all” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Furthermore, about 40% enter some sort of postsecondary education; however, fewer than 20% complete a 4 year degree (García Bedolla, 2012). Spanish speaking students, who represent the largest group of culturally and linguistically

diverse population in schools, have a higher dropout rate due to the lack of successful language acquisition and academic success (Boone, 2011).

Educational Policy

Presently, many more ELL students are being exited out of ESL or sheltered classrooms in middle and high school and entering mainstream classes. Sheltered instruction is an approach to teaching content curriculum to students learning a new language. Teachers employ techniques that make the content accessible and develop students' skills in the new language (Short, Fidelman, & Lougit 2012). In fact, in recent years in the United States, educational policy toward ELLs has become more stringent, viewing these students from a deficit perspective model and increasingly demanding that English alone be used in their education (García et al., 2010). For example, recent legislature initiatives such as those in California (Proposition 227), Arizona (Proposition 203), and Massachusetts (Question 2) emphasize the rapid transition of ELLs into general education classrooms and limit the number of years and scope of language support programs (Harper & de Jong, 2009). Although most teachers are willing to assist students from diverse backgrounds, most are limited in their knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity and issues of second language acquisition (de Oliveira & Athanases, 2007; Rodriguez et al., 2010). Throughout the literature on the context of schooling, there is widespread agreement among scholars and researchers that the need for well-prepared teachers is crucial to the academic success of ELLs (García et al., 2010). Teachers want to do what is right for all students, however as Calderón, Slavin and Sanchez (2011) note "without better supports for teachers, we cannot expect better student outcomes" (p. 119).

The lack of teacher knowledge regarding second language acquisition and inconsistent school practices in securing the best program model for ELLs further complicates the matter for both students and teachers (McIntyre, Kyle, Chen, Muñoz, and Beldon, 2010; de Oliveira & Athanases, 2007; Stufft & Brogadir, 2011). Additionally, research has shown that explicit attention to the linguistic and cultural needs of ELLs is lacking in most teacher preparation programs and in ongoing professional development of in-service teachers (Harper & de Jong, 2009; de Oliveira & Athanases, 2007; Bunch, 2013).

School Structures

The academic realities faced by ELL students as whole cannot be adequately understood without considering the social and economic characteristics of the schools they attend, and the institutional history of U.S. schools (García et al., 2010). "Students from culturally and linguistically diverse families, who are ELLs remain the most marginalized in school" (Scanlan & López, 2012). Urban schools, in particular, have a history of struggling to meet the needs of immigrants and native students (Stufft & Brogadir, 2011). ELLs have less exposure and access to highly qualified teachers and promising educational outcomes than Native English only peers (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Additionally, financial constraints, limited personnel, overcrowded classrooms, social and racial tensions and debate about curriculum and instruction have been noted as accounting for challenging aspects to English language learning (Stufft & Brogadir, 2011). In most cases, wide and persistent achievement disparities between English learners and English proficient students show clearly, the authors contend, that schools must address the language, literacy, and academic needs of English learners more

effectively (Calderón et al., 2011). Although much has been written about how to best instruct English Language learners and what effective schools should look like for ELLs, there is a disconnect between what the research indicates and what actually occurs in schools (e.g. Goldenberg, 2008; Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral (2009). In the following section, I will define the problem that this study will address in order to get a better understanding of how administrators, teachers, and counselors describe their roles in working with ELLs.

Problem Statement

Although the literature has a significant number of articles devoted exclusively to best practices for ELLs, recommendations, and suggestions for school administrators and teachers (Calderón et al., 2011; Helfrich & Bosh, 2011) and studies that show what effective schools should look like for meeting the needs of ELLs (Han & Bridglall, 2009), schools are still faced with the troubling fact that ELLs are underachieving (Hopkins, Thompson, Linquanti, Hakuta, & August, 2013). Many come to school lacking the necessary English language skills, have low academic achievement and have decided to leave school in unprecedented numbers; an estimated one in two Latino students currently drops out of high school (García Bedolla, 2012). Unfortunately, many of these students who aspire to complete their high school diploma and go on to college find themselves disillusioned with the system and fail to achieve what they refer to as the "American Dream."

Moreover, ELLs will soon constitute a large portion of the student population. According to the U.S. Department of Education, ELLs comprise 16.7% of public school enrollment in large cities and estimates from *the American Educator* expect this group to

grow to 40 percent of the U.S. population by 2050 (Weyer, 2015). This demographic trend and cultural diversity will have significant implications for our nation's schools. Language minority students will arrive at schools around the nation having different dialects, educational experiences, and cultural heritage as part of who they are. For these reasons, special attention has been given to the concept of social justice in schools. Moreover, racial, ethnic, and cultural dimensions of identity directly affect students in schools (Scanlan & López, 2012). The education that ELLs should receive is of paramount importance and one of the most enduring challenges in public education (Cavanaugh, 2009). Unfortunately, a school's capacity to support ELLs has not kept pace with the growing need to address their academic and linguistic needs (Hopkins et al., 2013). Research at the school level is of critical importance because through research and practice, educators and researchers have come to a better understanding of the strengths and needs of ELLs, emphasizing that schools need to be more reflective of the students they serve. Some researchers argue ELLs are not achieving academic success because schools have ignored what the literature says about the necessity of incorporating culturally responsive pedagogy, review existing ESL models (e.g., Honigsfeld, 2009) and to properly support the needs of ELLs through consistent professional development for all staff (Hopkins et al., 2013). Additionally, connecting and valuing the strengths of ELLs families is critical for academic success (Cohen et al., 2009; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011). Moreover, inadequate educational policies have failed to provide a more cohesive plan to make certain that ELLs receive an adequate education with the proper supports (Goldenberg, 2008 & Rios-Aguilar, 2010). To clarify the intent of my study, I have outlined the purpose statement in the section below.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to understand, through a social justice theoretical lens, how teachers, administrators, and counselors describe their roles in relation to working with English language learners. Social justice is concerned with issues of sensitivity and being inclusive in order to achieve an equitable and just education for all students, in particular for ELLs. The central tenet in social justice leadership is that school leaders "must act as advocates in their schools and communities and, specifically, as advocates for the needs of marginalized students (Andersen, 2009). This advocacy stance is inherently connected to the growing number of ELLs in public schools and the historic marginalization of these students and their families. Taking up the charge of ensuring equitable and excellent education for ELLs is an essential component of social justice (Theoharis, 2007). Employing a social justice orientation to the education of ELLs is both critical and essential in today's school to ensure high quality educational programs for ELLs. As we are reminded by several researchers, "the education of ELLs is everyone's responsibility and not just from English as a Second Language teacher" (Berg, Petron, & Greybeck, 2012, p. 44).

Furthermore, for many immigrant students, schools are their first contact with the English language when they come to the U.S. Therefore, it is imperative to closely explore how individuals in a school describe their role in working with ELLs. I will use a social justice lens to explore how teachers, administrators, and counselors describe their roles in working with ELLs in their schools. In addition, I hope to examine the extent to which their descriptions reflect a social justice stance that is inclusive. An explanation of social justice and its framework will follow next.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that will guide this study draws on the tenets of social justice theory by Theoharis (2007). Social justice leaders make issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalized conditions central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision (Theoharis, 2007). Moreover, Theoharis posits that the need to create inclusive schooling practices for students with disabilities, ELLs and other students traditionally segregated in schools is essential to creating just schools. The term social justice is politically loaded and has numerous interpretations and meanings in the literature (Hytten & Bettez, 2011). It has its roots in educational disciplines like curriculum and pedagogy (Freire, 1998). For the purpose of this study, I will utilize Bell's (2007) description of education for social justice as "both a process and a goal" with the ultimate vision of "full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped by their needs" (p. 3).

Furthermore, researchers contend that social justice has gained the attention of educational scholars and practitioners in recent years as a result of the demographic changes, increased achievement and economic gaps of underserved populations, accountability pressures, and standardized testing (García Bedolla, 2012, Jean-Marie, Normore, Brooks, 2009; Hoppey & MCLeskey, 2010). Additionally, because of the growing numbers of ELLs in schools and the need to create more just schools, a social justice disposition has taken precedence in educational administration programs (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Theoharis, 2007) and in teaching and learning (Cochran et al., 2009; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012) with an emphasis on implementing culturally responsive pedagogy. Culturally responsive pedagogy has been defined by (Hayes & Juarez, 2012)

as an approach to teaching and learning that addresses the sociopolitical context of White supremacy within education and society over time while simultaneously fostering students' abilities to achieve high levels of academic success and cultural competence. Marshall and Oliva (2010) posit that the belief that students have the ability to learn and achieve academic success, given a positive supportive environment, is embedded into the culture of a socially just school.

Moreover, much of the literature on social justice is primarily centered on educational leaders, instruction, and models of effective schools. A socially just orientation requires educational leaders to interrogate the underlying causes and imagine leadership that can influence equitable, inclusive, and democratic educational experience for all students (Cooper, 2009). Place, Ballenger, Wasonga, Piveral and Edmonds (2010), in studying principals' perspectives of social justice in schools, noted that principals who raised social justice issues and made decisions in the best interest of students, though they may not be seen as popular, created inclusive environments. The authors concluded that leaders should be courageous in "doing what is best for students" (p. 538). Social justice supports the notion that educational leaders have a social and moral obligation to foster equitable school practices and outcomes for varying cultural backgrounds (Evans, 2007). The use of social justice as a theoretical orientation will provide a lens from which to explore how administrators, teachers, and counselors conceptualize their roles in working with ELLs. This will allow school personnel to reflect on their beliefs, assumptions, question institutional practices, and more consciously examine their responsibility and potential to serve and advocate for ELLs in their respective school. Hopefully, this study

will contribute to the importance of the varying roles that other school personnel play in creating socially schools, potentially leading to improved practices for ELLs.

A social justice perspective will be utilized to gain access to the fundamental understanding of what it means to lead for social justice, as well as how equity is distributed within the school environment. The phrase "social justice" appears in many school's mission statements and in educational reform proposals, however it is unclear, as Hytten and Bettez (2011) point out, what it means to invoke a vision of social justice or how this might influence issues such as program development, curricula, practicum opportunities, educational philosophy, social vision, and activist work.

There is a long history of educators in the United States who foreground social justice issues in their work and who are passionate about its centrality to schooling in a democratic society (García Bedolla, 2012; Hytten & Bettez, 2011). In a more practical approach to social justice, the literature contains numerous articles that offer criteria for what socially just practice in education looks like or should look like. Researchers and educational scholars offer advice and solutions to what should be present in a just school or in a teacher education program that is grounded on a vision of social justice, or of the competencies needed by teachers and leaders within a school to advocate for those that most marginalized. In terms of visions for social justice in schools, Calderón et al., (2011) offer one model built on four principles that have proven effective in working with ELLs. They recommend that a school's structure and leadership operate by collecting important data related to learning, teaching, attendance, behavior and other immediate outcomes, provide professional development, have standards of behavior and effective strategies in classrooms and school management, and leadership focused on

"high-reliability organization" (p. 58). Berg, Petron, and Greybeck, (2012) provide a list of five strategies for working with ELLs: understand academic background, make instruction meaningful, make instruction culturally responsive, foster interaction, and make materials comprehensible.

Additionally, Scanlan and Lopez (2012) explain how school leaders can use research literature to craft effective and integrated service delivery to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. In their proposed model, they emphasize cultivating language proficiency, ensuring high-quality curriculum, and promoting sociocultural integration to guide service delivery regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students. An example of such is offered by Theoharis and O'Toole's (2011) study where two principals engaged in creating a more socially just school for ELLs. One principal adopted a dual certification model, where staff receives professional development around ELLs. The other principal adopted a co teaching model where teams of general education teachers and English as second language (ESL) teachers planned as a team. The success of each of these schools helped the authors realize that socially just practices are possible for ELLs when school leaders are willing to actively engage in struggles and often difficult processes that lead to inclusive practices and mind-sets (p. 686). Moreover, García et al., 2010) suggest that teacher education programs should work to develop responsive teacher's knowledge that is rooted in the school community and the university setting. They argue that based on the demographic changes it is imperative that teacher's preparation become more connected to the schools and communities where ELLs reside (p. 139).

Jean-Marie et al. (2009) in their review of current literature on preparing 21st century school leaders for a new social order, claim that there is a need to increase the knowledge base for effective, socially just schools that support the learning of all students. They contend that leadership programs should promote opportunities for critical reflection, leadership praxis, critical discourse, and develop critical pedagogy related to issues of ethics, inclusion, democratic schooling, and social justice (p. 20).

Hytten and Bettez (2011) note that rather than coming to a consensus about what social justice means, it is more about developing alliances that help us to more effectively center a social justice agenda in schools and society- "especially at a time when the commitment to social justice in education seems to be wavering" (p. 21). Given the many definitions and perceptions attributed to social justice in the literature, it is imperative "to get a better sense of how people are calling upon the idea and the range of priorities and visions they hold" (Hytten & Bettez, 2011, p. 10). The research question that follows is intended to explore how administrators, teachers, and counselors view their roles in working with ELLs.

Research Questions

The most important tenet in social justice theory states that the purpose of an education in a democratic society should be to create an environment that is inclusive, offering the best opportunities for academic success of all students. When school personnel engage in such discourse and are willing to ask the difficult questions of themselves and the organization, then progress can be achieved (Goldenberg, 2008, Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011). The following overarching research question was designed to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of the study participants: How do

administrators, teachers, and counselors describe their roles in working with English language learners?

An additional research question will follow the overarching research question to explore teachers, counselor, and administrators views of the benefits and challenges of working with ELLs in terms of the following sub question:

How do teachers, counselor, and administrators describe the benefits and challenges in working with ELLs?

Definition of Key Terms

The following terms will be used throughout this study. *English language learners* (ELLs) refers to students whose native language is other than English and whose English proficiency is not yet developed to a point where they can profit from mainstream English instruction or communication geared toward students whose first language is English. In the literature or studies the term English language learners are also referred to as *Limited English Proficient* (LEP), *English learner* (EL), *Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students*, and *Language Minority Students* (García et al., 2010). *Hispanic* is a term used to refer to individuals of Puerto Rican, Mexican, Cuban, Central or South America origin (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). *Latino/as* refers to individuals who identify themselves as citizens or descendants from any Latin American country.

Social Justice refers to the full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs (Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011).

Throughout this study, I will use the term Hispanic. The term Latino/a is often used interchangeably with Hispanic across the literature. I will use Hispanic as a way to refer to the local community and school in which this study will be conducted. The term

Hispanic seems most suitable as there seems to be no universally acceptable way to describe the individual differences that exists within this U.S. population.

Significance of Study

The goal of this study will be to continue the discourse that already exists in the literature about the need to create inclusive schools and practices that place the needs of English language learners first from a social justice orientation**.** As the U.S. demographics changes and the number of ELLs entering the public school system needing language services is expected to grow, educators are faced with the challenge to effectively support these students' academic achievement; schools across the country need to consider the type of ESL program and services currently being offered at their schools (Honigsfeld, 2009; Stufft & Brogadir, 2011). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2010) report U.S. schools serve 11 million students whose first language is not English, representing an estimated 20% of the National enrollment (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010). Moreover, a school's culture and climate has a profound effect on the educational outcomes of ELLs. In general, ELLs that feel most connected to their school and who have teachers who respect their cultural and educational experiences have a better chance of graduating from high school (McMahon, Wernsman, & Rose, 2009; Scanlan & López, 2012). "A sustainable, positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for productive, contributive, and satisfying life in a democratic society" (Cohen et al., 2009, p. 182).

Despite the increase of social justice work in education, inequitable educational opportunities for ELLs continue to persist (Borman & Dowling, 2010), in particular for those ELLs at the high school level. These students struggle because they have had less

time to learn English; therefore, they struggle to meet the language and academic demands in general education classrooms. The high dropout rate of Latino students has a greater impact on our nation's economy. Boone (2011) asserts that youth that fails to complete their high school education will more likely face long periods of unemployment and or will earn substantially lower wages than a college-educated person.

Ultimately, the purpose of this study is an attempt to raise awareness among administrators, teachers, and counselors to reflect on their roles in working toward a more unified, inclusive practice in their schools. Schools operating from a social justice perspective align themselves with the belief that all students can learn and that they deserve the opportunities to do so. Education for social justice is concerned and seeks to improve the human condition and strives to end the oppression experienced by marginalized groups in our society. Its orientation redirects the focus from the individual, as ELLs are often viewed from a deficit perspective to a more communal good of what is fair and just (Bell, 1997; Marshall & Olivia, 2010; & Nieto, 2010).

My hope is that this study will inspire those working in a school community to develop reflective practices by exploring how they describe their roles in working with ELLs. Additionally, I hope that those who participate in the study will take up the challenge to serve as advocates for ELLs who need their support and encouragement as they learn a new language, acclimate to a new culture and deal with the expectations of attending U.S. schools. Additionally, I hope this study makes a case for continued dialogue among researchers, educators, and policy makers to embark on a quest to create school structures that are fair and equitable for ELLs. In the next section I will highlight some of the potential limitations of the study. My intent is best stated by Cohen et al. (2009) "When educators

and policy makers know, with some certainty, how we can improve schools and learning, it is our moral responsibility to act on that knowledge" (p. 183).

Limitations

The purpose of this section is to delineate the limits of this study. Since the purpose of phenomenology is to capture of the lived experiences of individuals in their natural settings (Creswell, 2009), it is more concerned with real-life experiences and not with causality or the impacts of educational interventions. According to this methodology, interpretation is more important than causation (Denzin, 1994). Moreover, it is not vested in giving explanations for things or to generalize beyond an individual's perceptions (Selvi, 2010; Creswell, 2007; 2009).

Since the intent of phenomenology as a form of qualitative inquiry is not to generalize findings to individuals, sites, or places outside of those under study, the first limitation of this research centers on the issue of generalizability (Creswell, 2009). The decisions that I will make in selecting the participants, the number of participants, setting, interviews, and focus group participants, will impact the data that will eventually be collected. Although on a greater scheme of things it would be wise to include more individuals in this study to contribute to their roles in working with ELLs from a social justice orientation, I will purposely select four administrators, four teachers from various disciplines (Math, Science, Social Studies, Language Arts), and one ESL teacher. Additionally, data collection and analysis will be focused on the methodology of increasing awareness to an issue or problem based on its context and not for the purpose of generalizations.

A second limitation of this study is the small sample of participants that will be purposely selected from one geographic area and context. Therefore, the results of this study are not generalizable to other schools and regions of the country. Consequently, the findings will be limited in scope. However, insight to be gained from interviewing administrators, teachers, and counselors has the potential to generate rich and varied descriptions that will contribute to the knowledge base about social justice conceptualizations when individuals in a school setting are faced with a social justice dilemma.

A major limitation to this study will be how I frame the study from my own personal experiences and point of view. Qualitative inquiry begins with the internal search to discover, with an encompassing puzzlement, a passionate desire to know, a devotion and commitment to pursue a question that is strongly connected to one's own identity and selfhood (Moustakas, 2001). My personal background and personal experience will undoubtedly impact my interpretations and reflections throughout this study. In narrowing my focus on how administrators, teachers, and counselors view their roles in working with ELLs, I will be limited to these individuals' perceptions and not have opportunity to explore the roles of other individuals in the school community.

How I came to the Research

This study grew out of my personal experience as school counselor in a public school. I started my job in 2007 in a district where a significant number of the students are Hispanic (47%). I was responsible for working with students in the 5th grade. At the time, there were approximately 15 English language learners (ELLs) in the school in grade five and six combined. I would follow these students and their families until 8th

grade graduation. One of my immediate reactions to the school environment was the small number of Spanish-speaking staff. Most of the teachers were White and monolingual. The only bilingual staff members in the building were myself and two other teachers. Communication between teachers and their students was nonexistent as most teachers and staff spoke only English, including the ESL teacher. To complicate matters, the administration and building secretaries did not speak Spanish.

Over the past seven years, the enrollment of ELLs continued to grow, and I became deeply engaged in raising faculty awareness of the issues faced by ELLs. I made it my goal to make certain that the level of services provided to these students was optimal. As a counselor committed to serving others, I took up the challenge to make a difference in their lives. It was not just the right thing to do for me, it was personal, and I see it as my moral obligation to advocate for ELLs and their families. This passion grew out of the many inequities that I have witnessed in working with ELLs at the school. I had continuous meetings with the principal and teachers who expressed a desire to learn more about how to teach ELLs. Much to my dismay, as a district we failed to consider the needs of these students. The two years that I spent at the middle school, there was never professional development offered to teachers about ELLs. For the most part, it appeared to be my responsibility being that I was bilingual, shared the same culture, and could relate to the students and their families. Often, I served as an interpreter for families entering the district as well as for students. I became a source of information related to the cultural, social and emotional support teachers needed, as well as for the district.

In 2012, I received a call from the district offering me the opportunity to move to the high school and I accepted. At the high school, the issues and problems faced by ELLs were even more alarming and a cause for concern. Many of the ELLs have failed to pass state exams, many are over age, under credited, and have failed many of their general education classes. The ELLs receive one period of ESL and one period of English (beginner, intermediate, and advanced level). The rest of the day these students are in general classes with no language or academic support. I started working at the high school in 2011 and was not assigned to work with the ELLs. However, I was constantly requested to translate information in Spanish to parents and students. Noticing the need to assist ELLs and their parents, I spoke to my supervisor and requested that I manage all ELLs (Spanish) speaking students. Most of our ELLs are Spanish speaking. This made sense because I am bilingual and able to communicate with families and students. This year, my counseling caseload consists of all ELLs regardless of native language. I spend most of the time advocating for more supportive services for these students. I feel that it is my sole responsibility to advocate in making certain that they are not left behind.

Often times, I wondered how we, as a district, expect ELLs to succeed if we do not provide them with the necessary academic and language support. Apart from an ESL teacher, ELLs have no other support systems in the school. During my second year at the high school, I continued my endeavor to seek academic supports advocate for services for our ELLs. I have been able to develop a good rapport with many of the teachers and I assist them in developing an understanding of the issues faced by ELLs from a cultural perspective and from an academic view point. From my personal conversations with teachers, the majority feel unprepared to teach and to successfully reach their ELLs. I

have also encountered resistance from some faculty, members which has been disheartening. In general, I have had the misfortune of hearing teachers refer to ELLs as "lazy" and "unmotivated." I have witnessed teachers who make little effort to work with ELLs.

My unwavering commitment to help ELLs continues. In 2012, I reached out to the superintendent to express my concerns about our district's ELLs. Many of our ELLs were failing courses and the general education teachers' lack of knowledge, and the number of students who consider dropping out of school was cause for concern. As a result of this, the superintendent, principal, ESL teacher, and our director of curriculum and instruction met to discuss possible solutions to the current of our ELLs. At this meeting, I was charged with the responsibility to research schools that have implemented the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model, a sheltered instruction approach geared toward providing support for ELLs in general education classes. Although external factors continued to take precedence over the need to address our ESL population, I encouraged the principal to visit a model (SIOP) school. In 2012, the principal of the school, myself, and the ESL teacher visited a school in North Jersey. Although we had a favorable visit and there was interest to add instructional support for ELL students along with teacher training, we had a setback. There was a change in administration and the ESL teacher transferred to another school. At the present time, I continue to work with our administration and the Director of Elementary Education to advocate for services, such as teacher training and academic support for our ELLs. My own personal experiences and those within the school have contributed to the design and ideas for this study. I will highlight my positionality below.

Positionality

In a qualitative study, the researcher is the main instrument to make sense of phenomena (Merriam, 2009). As such, recognizing the researchers' positionality, the lens from which the researcher formulated his or her study is critical to the readers understanding of the assumptions that influence how the research evolved, analysis, and represents the findings of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

As a school counselor, educator, and of Hispanic descent, I have experienced the public school system in the U.S. in various capacities. Who I am as a researcher and person is a direct result of my race, class, gender and my close relationship to the students and families that I have served throughout my career as a school counselor. I have a strong bias toward the inclusive practices of all students, especially of ELLs. I firmly believe that everyone in a school system has the responsibility and plays an essential role in educating and meeting the needs of ELLs.

My perspective as a researcher, my beliefs about research, the methodologies I choose, and the question I will attempt to address, have been built on my prior knowledge, personal experiences, and professional biases which influence how I approach each situation.

"Interpretive research begins with and ends with the biography and self of the researcher" (Denzin, 1986, p. 12). This study emerged as I observed school practices related to ELLs, personal conversations with teachers, and review of data related to low-achieving ELLs.

Conclusion

The rapidly changing demographics in the U.S. public schools will require significant changes in how schools operate. U.S. schools are responsible for meeting the educational needs of an increasingly diverse student population (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Moreover, an estimated 5 million ELLs were enrolled in U.S. schools during the 2010-2011 school years (Aud et al., 2013). ELLs are a diverse and growing school-aged population in K-12 schools, with varied linguistic, economic, and cultural backgrounds which present a unique need and challenges to a school community (DeCapua & Marshall & Olivia, 2010). Nationwide, the number of ELLs in the U.S. has increased by more than 10% in the past decade, although variations exist across states.

The challenges that these circumstances present can be particularly significant at the secondary level, where an increasing number of ELLs are entering the U.S. school system for the first time (Dutro, Levy, Moore, 2011; & Peercy, 2012), including those with interrupted formal education or limited native language literacy (Juarez & Hayes, 2010). Additionally, "long-term ELLs," which includes students that have been enrolled in U.S. schools for many years without exiting ELL status, are also a challenge for many secondary schools (Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2012). ELLs at the high school are less likely to pass high school proficiency tests and are more likely to drop out of school than their English-speaking peers (García Bedolla, 2012).

Researchers and scholars have noted that the educational success of ELLs is comprised of the services and opportunities, incorporating funds of knowledge, and practicing culturally responsive teaching and learning that embrace the whole student (Araujo, 2009). In many cases, teacher education programs treat the teaching of second

language learners as an afterthought or as the responsibility of ELL teachers (Sowa, 2009). With the increase of ELLs in general education classrooms, it is imperative to prepare all teachers to teach ELLs (Sowa, 2009; Lucas, Villegas, Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008).

Overview

Chapter 2 provides a review of the scholarly literature that relates to this study. This section includes a brief overview of the demographic landscape in the U.S., as well as information regarding the number of ELLs that currently make up in U.S. public schools. In addition, literature on culturally responsive teaching and teacher education programs are discussed. Studies relative to meeting the needs of ELLs are also conveyed. Social justice is further explored in this section which provides the lens from which this study is supported.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the methodology and procedures chosen for this study. This section includes a description of the context of the study, including the school, district, and community, an overview of the chosen population and participants, the methodological approach, the data collection process and sources of data, and the data analysis.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of this study. Chapter 5 presents the conclusions of the study. It describes the implications for teachers, administrators, school counselors, and policy makers and future directions for research related to ELLs in high schools.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

As the growing number of ELLs in U.S. public schools continues to increase, it is essential for school principals, counselors, and teachers to critically reflect on meeting the needs of ELLs from a social justice perspective. There are six bodies of literature that ground this study of how teachers, principals, and counselors describe their roles in working with ELLs. The first body of literature focuses attention on the changing demographics in U.S. schools, situating the need for paying closer attention to the academic success of ELLs. The second body of literature considers what research studies say about teachers' attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs toward ELLs. The third body of literature focuses on teacher education programs for pre-service and in-service teachers in preparing them to teach a diverse group of students. The fourth body of literature explores research on effective schools for ELLs. The fifth body of literature examines the impact of educational policy with regards to ELLs in U.S. public schools. The sixth body of literature concerns the need for social justice in schools and how this requires a change in thinking about ELLs.

The Landscape of ELLs in U.S. Classrooms

The demographics of the U.S. classrooms have changed, becoming more diverse at a rapid rate. Schools are now serving a greater majority of ELLs: both native and non-native born students. The number of ELLs is expected to grow significantly in the next decade. Between the fall 2011 and projections for fall 2021, the number of White students enrolled in U.S. public schools is projected to decrease, from 25.9 million to 25.3 million, and their share of enrollment is expected to decline to 48%. The number of

Hispanic public school students is projected to increase from 7.9 million in 2011 to 14.2 million in 2021, representing a 27% share of enrollment (The Condition of Education, 2013). An estimated 16.7% of Hispanic students in U.S. schools are ELLs and the population is expected to grow to 40% by 2050 (Weyers, 2015). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2012), in many U.S. schools, on average, White students represent only 52% of the students of the school population, and 21% of the students speak a language other than English at home. Given these statistics of the growing numbers of ELLs in the United States school-age population, teacher educators need to act to prepare all future teachers to effectively work with ELLs (Lucas et al., 2008; Roy-Campbell, 2013).

ELLs: A Diverse Population

Language diversity. Of the dozen or so language spoken in today's schools, Spanish is the most widely used. Over 73% of the ELLs in U.S. public schools are native Spanish speakers (Migration Policy Institute, 2015). Although Spanish is the predominant language used by many ELLs in 43 states, Chinese, Somali, and American Indian languages are the languages most spoken by ELLs respectively in Montana, North Dakota, Maine, South Dakota, Vermont, Hawaii, and Alaska (Migration Policy Institute, 2015). In fact, there are over 400 languages spoken in U.S. schools (García et al., 2010; Roy-Campbell, 2013). The demographics of the U.S. are changing, and the number of ELLs is expected to increase in both rural and urban public schools in the U.S. (Hyland, 2010; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012). Consequently, language diversity reflects both long and recent historical and demographic trends in U.S. schools around the country.

ELLs come from countries from around the world. Children of immigrants are the fastest growing population and are transforming the current landscape in American public schools by making it more culturally and linguistically diverse (Ates, Kim, & Grigsby, 2015). About two-thirds of ELLs are from low-income families. Most ELLs were born in the U.S. and often are second or third generation U.S. citizens. Many have little to no knowledge of the English language when they arrive, and some may have had different levels of schooling (de Schonewise Almanza & Klingner, 2012). The majorities of these students have a difficult time negotiating classroom expectations, perform poorly on state-tests, and drop-out before receiving a high school diploma (García Bedolla, 2012). The diversity of ELLs is such that some may have attended school in their native country, are educated and are ready to meet the demands of grade-level work. Therefore, teachers must consider a student's cultural, linguistic, and educational background when planning classroom instruction. In addition, teachers will need to develop the skills and strategies for connecting with students who differ from their own backgrounds (Gay, 2010; Nieto, 2010). Heineke, Coleman, Ferrell, and Kersemeier (2012) posit that teachers must acknowledge and address the challenges and issues related to linguistic diversity if they are to improve the academic outcomes of ELLs.

According to several scholars, linguistic diversity is most apparent in U. S. schools (Linn & Hemmer, 2011; Nelson & Guerra, 2014). This diverse representation of languages creates a tremendous challenge on local schools that have the responsibility for educating these students. In fact, it is well documented in the literature that educational systems struggle to support the needs of culturally diverse students (Collins, 2014; Sailes, 2008), in particular ELLs (Heineke et al., 2012). ELLs must learn English while

simultaneously being expected to meet the demands of understanding academic content. Consequently, ELLs often do not fare well academically compared to their English only peers. This is most apparent and especially troubling at the secondary level where the content is more challenging and English language proficiency is necessary for academic success (Peercey, 2012; de Schonwise & Klingner, 2012).

Furthermore, as the diversity in student body continues to change from year to year, our teacher population does not reflect this diverse student population. Eighty to ninety percent of the teaching population is White and female and speak only English (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Feistritzer, 2011; Lowenstein, 2009). The method of instruction is mainly monolingual, taught by teachers who have little to no preparation or knowledge in second language acquisition (Berg, Petrón, Greybeck, 2012; Calderón, et al., 2011) and have little to no direct interaction with people from diverse cultural backgrounds (de Oliveira & Athaneses, 2007; Feistritzer, 2011; Rodriguez et al., 2010). ELLs do not seem well supported in the classroom because many teachers lack the understanding of how their roles and teaching approaches can best support ELLs' needs (Yoon, 2008). Through their research, Dove and Honigsfeld (2010) have found that teachers often admit that they lack understanding of ELLs sociocultural, linguistic, academic, and social needs. Additionally, they concluded that teachers work in isolation without much support, which precludes them from knowing how to best assist their ELLs.

It is evident that such a disparity in understanding, knowledge, and experience in educating ELLs is cause for concern. As the number of linguistically diverse students continues to grow, Heineke et al. (2012) assert that, "educators must acknowledge and

address the challenges and issues related to linguistic difference" (p. 130). Based on their research, Heineke and colleagues offer recommendations necessary for building linguistically responsive schools. This includes negotiating language policy and practice, laying the ideological groundwork for school change; building school structures and support systems; and fostering collaborative communities of learners.

Cultural Diversity

The cultural diversity ELLs bring to school is tied into their linguistic development, and as such, needs to be considered when developing curriculum and instruction (de Schonewise & Klingner, 2012; Nieto, 2000). Students identified as culturally and linguistically diverse represent a large majority of the U.S. student population (Sullivan, 2011), with ELLs comprising the fastest subgroup (Honigsfeld, 2009). ELLs come to school with diverse cultural experiences and languages; these characteristics need to be considered in order to fully support the academic needs of this population (Goldenberg, 2008). Culture is critical for learning as cultural practices shape cognitive processes that serve the foundation for learning both in and out of school (Han & Bridglall, 2009). Therefore, schools need to critically reflect on building meaningful learning environments that will be enhanced through the recognition of students' background and identities in instruction (Echevarria & Vogt, 2010).

Furthermore, the cultural deprivation explanation views low-income and minority students' cultural capital in the home and communities as a major factor that explains their low academic achievement (Gay, 2010; Souto-Manning & Mitchell, 2010). The cultural deficit mentality continues to be present in schools today, is internalized by teachers, and results in low teacher expectation and uninspiring teaching in schools

(Greene, 2004). Nelson and Guerra (2014) for example, conducted a qualitative study of 111 teachers and educational leaders at two school districts in Texas and Michigan that examined educator beliefs and cultural knowledge about diverse students and families. They reported that most participants appear to have a general awareness of culture, but also hold a number of deficit beliefs about diverse students and families. Other studies have reported similar findings (e.g., Castro, 2010; Gay, 2010). Unfortunately, differences in culture, race, and nation of origin are often conceived of as educational obstacles, rather than resources (Grainger & Jones, 2013). Sullivan and Bal (2013) posits "this ideology is reflected in educational practices that tend to reify White, monolingual, U.S. born students as the norm and present ELL students as the "other" (p. 387). In order to address the impact of deficits in schools, teachers need better preparation through teacher education programs and professional development programs. García and Guerra (2011) state that it is important for teachers to have a full understanding of the subject matter they will teach. However, it is more important for teachers to understand the students they will teach, and to enhance their understanding of how to deconstruct deficit thinking through professional development. Moreover, Van Roekel (2011), in his National Education Association (NEA) policy brief, affirms that in order to maximize achievement opportunities for ELLs, educators must understand and appreciate students' different cultural backgrounds.

Contrary to the deficit perspectives regarding culture, there are promising efforts made by teacher education programs to examine the significance of developing teacher candidates with the knowledge of cultural diversity. Research studies have confirmed that schools that operate to understand and appreciate cultural and linguistic diversity have

students that are more engaged and are more academically successful (Gay, 2010). As a result of shifts in ethnicity and culture in today' schools, multicultural education has become an imperative means of addressing the diverse cultures that exists in U.S. public schools, (Assaf, Garza, & Battle's (2010). Research in the field of teacher education asserts that it is important to examine teacher educators' beliefs and attitudes about diversity because they play a pivotal role in the shaping beliefs and attitudes of future teachers. For example, Assaf et al. (2010) self-study examined the perceptions, practices, and coherence in one teacher education program at a southwestern university. Fourteen teacher educators including two of the authors participated in the study. They utilized Cochran-Smith's (2003) multicultural conceptual framework to examine the beliefs and attitudes of teacher educators. Findings revealed that all the teacher educators held the belief that multicultural education should build on students' ethnic and linguistic differences. However, many expressed concerns about the ethnic differences between candidates and the students they will teach in schools. In order to be responsive, some believed that teacher candidates should learn to take an interest in their students' ethnic backgrounds through field-experiences. One teacher noted, "If we get a student and we are not sure about their culture, instead of judging them right away, I think we need to do a little research or look something up." Another suggested bringing in experts in the field to talk to teacher candidates: "Maybe bring in some experts that have taught people of these cultures and have them share how they learn in their country or what are some of the important things…you know they can advise us" (p. 128). Through their study, participants became more cognizant of the importance of talking about racism in relation to multicultural teaching and learning, and how colorblind perspectives, often

unintentional, can negatively affect student learning. More importantly, these findings suggest that the teacher educators' varied perspectives and practices may not reflect a coherent program in which faculty members have a collective purpose and a central focus for multiculturalism in school settings. Assaf and colleagues note, "if teacher educators hope to positively influence the success of culturally and linguistically diverse students, then we must continuously assess our thinking and classroom practice to improve the way we educate future teachers" (p. 130). The authors offer the following recommendations for teacher education programs: 1) deans of colleges and chairs of teacher education programs should provide teacher educators' the time and professional support to develop coherent programs; 2) since teacher education programs work closely with school districts and community groups, a cohesive program should consider the goals and needs of the local community; and 3) teacher educators should volunteer in community-based field experiences to gain valuable resources for understanding students, for understanding contextual factors significant to learning in diverse school settings, and for providing opportunities for linking community, schools, and university goals.

Achievement Gap

The academic disparities between ELLs and English peers continue to plague our educational system even though efforts to the contrary have been documented to reduce the achievement gap among students (Sandy & Duncan, 2010). Researchers consistently find wide disparities between the academic achievement of ELLs and their English-proficient counterparts. These gaps signal a need for increased teacher and staff preparation, a whole-school commitment to the English learner population, and the need for home-school linkages and collaborations, so that schools can more effectively address

the needs of these students' language, literacy, and core content needs (Calderón et al., 2011, p. 106).

Furthermore, the academic success of ELLs is significantly affected by the low number of ESL teachers, and the lack of teacher preparation in comparison to the varied needs of ELLs (Bunch, 2013). It is estimated that 7,000 students drop out of school each day, and nationwide only about 70% of students graduate with a high school diploma (Boone, 2011). Moreover, The National Center of Education Statistics (2012) reports that on reading assessments (NAEP), 69% of ELLs scored below the basic range with only 31% scoring at or above the proficient level. On the other hand, 44% of White students scored at or above the proficient level (Hussar & Bailey, 2011). These statistics further support (Calderón et al., 2011) the assertion that closing the achievement gaps means closing similar gaps in teacher education programs and ongoing professional development.

The Education of ELLs in U.S. Schools

The education of ELLs has been of great concern throughout our nation's history. The implications for schools and teachers is great as ELLs are a linguistically, culturally, and educationally heterogeneous population (DeCapua & Marshall, 2011), as well as varying in social, and emotional needs (Roy-Campbell, 2013). Scholars and researchers alike have noted that upon arrival to the U.S., public schools are the first meaningful experience they receive in the English language and acculturation. The most common program model serving ELLs students in U.S. schools is the "pull-out" model. In this model, students spend most of their day in general education classrooms with native speakers English-speaking peers and teachers. At some point during the day they are

pulled out for ESL instruction. Further, schools are expected and required to assist these students to acclimate to the school culture, learn English, and most importantly graduate from high school. English language learners in high school present schools with an even greater challenge. These students are not only expected to master academic content, often with minimal background knowledge or preparation, but also have fewer years to master the English language (Calderón et al., 2011).

A number of scholarly articles are available in the literature that specifically focuses on effective strategies and instructional practices that teachers could utilize to promote and support ELLs learning. These articles include content specific instructional strategies to more general recommendations for administrators and teachers to effectively work with ELLs (e.g. Calderón et al., 2011; DelliCarpini & Dailey, 2009; Helfrich & Bosh, 2011). For example, from their experience as teachers of English as a Second Language, DelliCarpini and Dailey (2009) summarized their ideas of best practices with ELLs. They include: to compassionately understand ELLs, educators must fully experience language for themselves, ELLs must feel welcomed into the English-speaking culture, particularly in the early stages, social activities, and connections can launch the language learning experience. When there is sufficient scaffold input, language is actually acquired not just learned. Although teachers have at their disposal numerous articles and books that specifically address their academic, social, and personal needs, ELLs continue to underachieve (Hopkins et al., 2013).

Moreover, throughout the literature, consensus has established some key research findings for teaching ELLs, which emphasize the development of oral language

(McGraner & Saenz, 2009), focus on academic language (Aimny & Karanthanos, 2011), and emphasize culturally inclusive practices (Gay, 2010; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011).

Unfortunately, this necessary knowledge is often not present in the requirements of teacher education programs (Bunch, 2013), in state certification exams, or in school based teacher evaluations (Samson & Collins, 2012). The obstacles faced by ELLs in schools are well documented in the literature. An examination of school characteristics and educational outcomes reveals pervasive disparities in resources (Nagel, 2016), opportunities to learn, access and representation in honors or advanced placement courses (Callahan, Wilkinson, & Muller, 2010) relative to their White peers (Braboy, Castagno, & Maughan, 2007); inadequate teacher training (Gandara & Hopkins, 2010); and curricular isolation (Fraturra & Capper, 2007; Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010). Jiménez-Castellanos and García (2017) review of the cost study literature revealed that: 1) states are not allocating sufficient funds to adequately support K-12 ELL population; 2) ELLs are inconsistently addressed across the cost study literature, and 3) current costing out methods need to be adapted better to account for the diverse and complex needs of ELLs (p. 204).

Additionally, within the ESL context, Dove and Honigsfeld (2010) observed that in many districts ESL directors are preoccupied with managing a program, which often takes precedence over instructional practices, and are not readily available to assist teachers or provide ongoing professional support. The education ELLs should receive is of paramount importance and one of the most difficult challenges in public education (Cavanaugh, 2009). Unfortunately, it is well documented that a school's capacity to support ELLs has not kept pace with the ongoing needs of ELLs academic and linguistic

needs (Hopkins et al., 2013). The lack of teacher knowledge about second language acquisition and inconsistent school practices in securing the best possible ELL model complicates the matter for both students and teachers (McIntyre et al., 2010; Beldon, 2010; de Oliveira & Athanases, 2007; Stufft & Brogadir, 2011).

The ongoing debate about the use of a student's native language leads to further discrepancies in the type of instruction that ELLs receive in U.S. schools. Many argue that allowing students to use their native language interferes with their English learning. On the contrary, numerous research studies have shown that using a student's native language during academic instruction is vital to the academic development of ELLs (August, Goldenberg, & Rueda, 2010 & Karanthanos, 2009). In fact, being fluent in two languages enhances cognitive and social growth (Hakuta, 2011). However, many schools around the U.S. continue to place ELLs in all English classrooms with little to no language support in their native language. Studies have consistently shown that students who are able to use their native language have greater academic gains than students who are placed in English only classrooms (Hakuta, 2011).

Through his work in language development, Cummins (2001) asserts that teachers have the misconception and do not fully comprehend ELL students' language development; with many believing it takes 2 to 3 years to develop oral language fluency in second language acquisition. Cummins contributed to an understanding of the language students brings to the school as Basic Interpersonal Communications Skills (BICS) or social language. From there students move on to develop what he refers to as Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). Researchers note that a large majority of ELLs may have a good command of the social language, which leads teachers

and others to believe that they know enough English to succeed in the classroom. While this is useful for day-to-day conversations, it is not enough for students to meet the demands and expectations in academic content. Experts in the field of second language explain that it takes 4 to 7 years to develop cognitive academic language proficiency in another language (Cummins, 2000 & Goldenberg, 2008).

Researchers and proponents of the use of native language argue that students who are learning English should receive content instruction in their native language until they achieve academic proficiency in English. In fact, with respect to home-language (L1) proficiency, it is well documented that home language literacy development supports second language literacy (Bunch, 2013; Cummins, 2001). The use of a student's native language would give ELLs the opportunity to compete academically with their English only peers (August, Goldenberg, & Rueda, 2010 & Karanthanos, 2009).

As aforementioned, these arguments set the stage for U.S. public schools, policymakers and those in authority to advocate for social justice and to pursue a culturally relevant education for ELLs. As Lazar (2013) notes, teaching for social justice entails taking a critical look at understanding students and advocating for them.

Language Acquisition Policies

In classrooms across the U.S., language policies guide how teachers support and develop the language abilities of students identified as ELLs. As part of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which made accountability greater for those teaching ELLs, legislators changed the federal directives for teaching ELLs by replacing the Bilingual Education Act with the English Language Acquisition Act, demonstrating a shift in language education from multilingual to monolingual (Heineke & Cameron, 2013). The

English-only movement began in 1981 with Senator Samuel Ichiye Hayakawa in which he introduced a constitutional amendment to establish English as the official language of the U.S. In his speech to Congress, Senator Hayakawa asserted that it was necessary to declare English as the sole language because "separate languages can fracture and fragment a society." Although his amendment failed at the federal level, the state governments took matters into their own hands. In the year 2014, thirty-one states have enacted such official English laws (O'Sullivan, 2015). States like California (Proposition 227), Arizona (Proposition, 203), and Massachusetts (Questions 2)-have officially passed and enforced English-only language policies. In Arizona and California, Bilingual Education was replaced with Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) model. This model is designed to include native language support; however, the SEI model mandated in Arizona and California cannot exceed one year and limits native language support (Lopez & McEneaney, 2012; O'Sullivan, 2015). Arizona's model is designed to accelerate the learning of the English language with the goal for ELLs to become fluent or proficient in English in one year.

The literature on language policy indicates that the dilemma is not about ELLs learning English; it is about whether language policies address the needs of ELLs. Research studies conducted on the nature and outcome of language policies of ELLs reveals that these students have not made much academic progress. There is also agreement among teachers that policies in general do not advance an ELLs proficiency in English. Rios-Aguilar, González-Canché, and Moll, (2010) conducted a study of 880 elementary and secondary teachers from 8 districts that examined teachers' beliefs, opinions, and knowledge regarding effective pedagogical and curricular strategies to

teach ELLs in a 4- hour block in an English Immersion model. Teacher surveys revealed that many teachers felt that the goals of the program were not met, adding that there was little to no acceleration of ELLs English proficiency. Additionally, most teachers believed that ELL students would not be able to gain English proficiency in one year. Moreover, most teachers thought that the 4-hour block was not effective in providing access to the academic content needed to succeed in school. Teachers reported that less than 50% of their ELL students met grade-level standards. Data from this study and others reveal that ELLs have not made significant academic improvement as a result of changes in language policies (Gandara & Hopkins, 2010). For example, a five-year study conducted by the California Department of Education showed inconclusive changes in ELL progress (O'Sullivan, 2015). This data raises serious questions about the ELLs future academic path. The authors questioned how and when they would be provided with the opportunity to catch up with their English-speaking peers? López and McEneaney (2012) note that one of the key issues in failing to address the needs of ELLs is that implementation of language acquisition model depends much on the political and ideological context of individual school systems and on the part of educators. O' Sullivan (2015) writes:

"By abandoning bilingual education in favor of the new model of English immersion, California arguably turned its students' worlds upside down with little forethought and only a backward glance" (p. 703).

Studies that have shown improvement in language policy are based on the type of resources and supports teachers received as language policies are enacted. This is shown in Lopez and McEneaney's (2012) study, which examined reading achievement scores in

the context of implementation of language acquisition policies across states. Findings indicated that ELLs in states with strong bilingual emphasis had significantly higher reading achievement. Additionally, teachers who received significant pre-service training on ELL issues and more professional development for working with diverse students had a significant effect on reading achievement.

Furthermore, teacher sentiments regarding language policies have also been explored. For example, Heineke and Cameron (2013) conducted a study with eight teachers trained by Teach for America in the Phoenix metropolitan area urban school. In their study, they sought to understand the teacher's role in English-only language policy implementation; specifically, they were interested in examining how teachers' affiliation to the TFA organization affected their appropriation of Arizona language policy. The findings from this study revealed that (a) teachers openly critiqued the language policy, (b) teachers rejected the status quo and appropriated the language policy in their classrooms, and (c) teachers conceptualized the role of teacher as integral to sustained educational change.

Sullivan (2011) states that societal and systemic factors further shape these students' educational experiences; these factors include English-only legislation, the availability of language supports, and the widespread decrease in the number of bilingual educators. In fact, approximately 30% of students identified as ELLs reside in states where English-only legislation dictates the type and amount of language support received by these students. Such limitations in learning opportunities can result in a number of negative outcomes (e.g. behavioral, referral to special education, grade retention, and low

academic engagement). Honigsfeld (2010) states: “Limiting language support for ELLs to one-year immersion programs raise significant civil rights problems” (p. 168).

As a democratic society built on the premise of educating all students and having equal access to educational opportunities our educational system, educational policies have done little to promote the necessary supports needed by ELLs in schools. Many of the rights afforded to ELLs have come in the way of lawsuits. The first and only Supreme Court case to deal with ELLs (O’Sullivan, 2015) was Lau vs Nichols (1974), a class action suit brought on behalf of a student in the San Francisco Unified School District. The suit claimed that the district failed to provide access to ELLs or to a meaningful curriculum for children who were limited English proficient and that this violated Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that “there is no equal treatment by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education” (Hakuta, 2011, p. 163).

Important to this case was that ELLs became a protected class and that schools bore an affirmative obligation to address both the language and curricular needs of these students. However, Lau did not require schools to adopt any one particular language program; they differed somewhat on the standard to be applied in determining whether a state or local had created a suitable accommodation for ELLs (O’Sullivan, 2015). It did require educators in schools to identify students with limited English proficiency, and implement services designed to assist ELLs (Callahan et al., 2010).

Teacher Attitudes, Perceptions, and Beliefs about ELLs

Rios-Aguilar (2010) states, "teachers play a central role in ELL students' education and research has shown that both teachers' perception of their own skills and abilities can influence student outcomes" (p. 5). Educational researchers and scholars have offered several reasons and explanations for why ELLs have not met with success, such as, low parental education, lack of formal education, and poverty. In many cases, ELLs are taught by teachers who have little or no understanding of their educational and cultural experiences (Rodriguez, Manner & Darcy, 2010). Additionally, a large majority of teachers lack the necessary pedagogical knowledge or training in properly instructing ELLs (Bunch, 2013). Others argue that schools are not inclusive of ELLs (Nagel, 2016) and are often placed in lower academic courses because they are often viewed from a deficit model (Hyland, 2010). Additionally, research has shown that ELLs are disproportionately identified as having learning disability; therefore, more likely to be referred for special education services. Sullivan (2011) study explored the extent of disproportionality in the identification and placement of cultural and linguistic diverse students identified as ELLs in special education. The results indicated that these students are increasingly likely to be identified as having learning disabilities or mental retardation and are less likely to be identified to be served in either the least or most restrictive educational environment relative to their White peers. These findings are consistent with other studies that report a high incidence of ELLs being over-identified for learning disabilities (Artiles & Bal, 2008; Samson & Lesaux, 2009).

In addition, the relationship between teacher and ELLs is critical to the academic success of students. Nelson and Guerra (2014) stated:

"Personal beliefs and perceptions are considered to be powerful filters that shape how an individual sees the world, sees other people, and sees oneself" (p. 2).

Researchers affirm that teacher attitudes and beliefs toward ELLs can affect what these students will learn (Medina, Hathaway, & Pilonieta, 2015). Several studies have been conducted that explore teachers' beliefs regarding ELLs and their teaching practices. These studies include teacher attitudes toward inclusion, assumptions about ELLs, and teacher dispositions (Han & Bridglall, 2009; Lazar, 2013; Yoon, 2007, 2008). For example, Yoon's (2008) study examined regular classroom teachers' views of their roles regarding ELLs and the relationship between their teaching approaches and the students' reactions and positioning of them in the classroom.

Yoon's study revealed that teachers can intentionally and unintentionally position students in more positive or negative ways through their teaching approaches. Moreover, teachers might position ELLs without realizing how they might be limiting the students' opportunities to develop a positive sense of themselves as learners. Furthermore, his study leads to the conclusion that teachers' positioning of ELLs is as important and teachers' response to their needs is crucial to be able to view them positively, which might influence their participation in learning. Yoon asserts that teachers who take the moral responsibility for students' learning aim to accomplish three main goals: to help students be academically strong, to become culturally competent, and to be socio-politically critical.

This aspect is importantly critical to the academic success for culturally and linguistically diverse students, such as ELLs who need more academic, social, and emotional support. Baum, Castro, Field, & Morowski (2016) contend that educators are

in the best position to build relationships that foster educational aspirations and performance. In their article the authors challenge teachers to build connections with students which can lead to a better understanding of students' challenges, home environment, and community that form who they are as individuals. Moreover, it has become clear that successful teachers of ELLs must not only incorporate and respect cultural practices and values but must be able to understand and challenge the oppressive relationship between the dominant culture and the students' cultural heritage (Banks, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Other implications to the learning of ELLs cited throughout the literature is related to the lack of diversity in the teaching population. In 2011, the United States Department of Education reported that an estimated 83% of teachers in U.S. schools are European American, have between 15 to 20 years of experience, and are monolingual. The implications of this reports and others illustrates that many ELLs are being taught by teachers who may not be able to assimilate their experiences to effectively instruct ELLs (Taylor, 2010; Nelson & Guerra, 2010). While that may be true, educational research has provided accounts of teachers that had enacted culturally relevant pedagogy and been successful in teaching students from historically marginalized groups (Hyland, 2009).

Markos (2012) conducted a study that investigated pre-service teachers' beliefs about and understanding of ELLs. His focus was on teachers' initial responses to the following question: "When you hear the words English language learner, what comes to mind?" One respondent remarked "I know them; they're gang bangers. I went to high school with a bunch of them. They're lazy; don't want to learn English". The results presented in this study reveal how teachers' dispositions about their students affect their

instruction and personal relationship with ELLs. On a broader scale, this study draws significant attention to the need of teacher education programs and teacher educators to develop programs that build in reflective practice in serving the needs of ELLs.

Rodriguez et al., (2010) investigated the perceptions of 11 teachers from a rural public elementary school in North Carolina and how these perceptions affect the learning experience of ELLs. The teachers in this study completed a survey at the beginning and end of the course. On the pre-course survey, participants completed questions regarding their demographic information, attitudes toward educating ELLs, and a content-based assessment regarding their knowledge of methods of instructing ELLs. Overall, teacher's capacity and perceptions of self-efficacy were low and aligned with perceptions that their preparation programs had failed to provide them with appropriate theoretical framework as well as insufficient experiences to support their readiness in instructing ELLs.

Although there are teachers who take their role as an educator for all students and not just for the privileged seriously, many continue to hold deficit views of ELLs. Not only are these students' linguistic resources ignored, low English language proficiency is often seen as the sole cause of the "achievement gap" (Shapiro, 2014).

Teacher Education

Despite the increasing number of ELLs across U.S. public schools, many teachers are underprepared to deal with the varied challenges faced by ELLs and the complex issues concerning the linguistic and culturally relevant education (Markos, 2012; Rosa & Orey, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2010) of these students. It is well documented in the literature, that the education of ELLs is a challenge for many schools around the nation. The fact that the nation's teachers are and will encounter a diverse range of learners

requires that every teacher has sufficient breadth and knowledge and range of skills to be able to meet needs of all students, including ELLs (Samson & Collins, 2012). Although there are specialist teachers, such as Bilingual teachers, English as Second Language teachers, who have the expertise in supporting ELLs, many teachers do not. In particular, the need of general education teachers is of critical importance (García et al., 2010). While general education teachers need to understand and know their content and pedagogy to teach grade level standards, they will also need specific skills to help ELLs access the curricula (Samson & Collins, 2012). Moreover, there is widespread agreement among scholars and researchers that the need for well-prepared teachers is crucial to the academic success of ELLs (García et al., 2010).

Research studies have consistently shown that teachers are more successful in teaching ELLs as a result of a solid educational experience and knowledge gained in universities and colleges that emphasize and build on what research says about educating ELLs (Goldenberg, 2008). Karanthanos' (2010) study illustrates the significance of educational practices that reinforce and address the needs of teachers of ELLs in university programs. Karanthanos explored to what extent two groups of general education teachers in the Midwestern region of the U.S. with differing degrees of English language learner specific university preparation reportedly engaged in practices that incorporated the native languages of English language learners in instruction. The findings indicated that while both groups of teachers engaged in practices that promoted English language use to some extent, teachers with at least three courses of English language learner specific university preparation appeared to engage in these to a greater extent than those that without such preparation.

Today, many schools of education face many challenges, one of the greatest challenges is to ensure that teacher candidates are familiar with the needs of ELLs and are well prepared to provide the necessary instruction that will help ELLs build their linguistic, social, and academic growth (Baecher, 2012). The biggest misconception cited throughout the literature is the belief that ELLs can be taught the same way as native speakers of English, "just good teaching" (Harper & DeJong, 2009). Honigsfeld (2009) contends that the one size fits all mentality is detrimental to the academic success of ELLs. Samson and Collins (2012) note:

"To date, there has been relatively little attention paid to the essential standards, knowledge, and skills that general education teachers ought to possess in order to provide effective instruction to ELLs placed in their classroom" (p. 215).

Furthermore, in many states teachers are not required to take courses in areas such as second language acquisition. In fact, only four states that require that teachers take specific courses to work with ELLs. These include Arizona, Florida, New York, and California (Ballantyne, Sanderman, & Levy, 2008). Samson and Collins (2012) further state that "by making sure that the special needs of ELLs are addressed at multiple stages of the teacher-preparation process, schools may gain higher quality teachers and more importantly, higher outcomes for ELLs" (p. 9).

Teacher education programs have been criticized for not adequately preparing in-service and pre-service teachers with the skills needed to teach for diversity, the knowledge, and skills and dispositions needed to successfully educate and support low-income, English-language learners. However, some teacher education programs have made it their goal to reexamine their programs with the intention to improve their service

delivery to consider what teachers will need to successfully meet the instructional needs of ELLs. One such study by Baecher (2012), explored the extent to which a teacher education curriculum at one institution was addressing the instructional needs of ELLs. Curricula were defined as the including all the required activities, from reading, assignments, projects, to fieldwork teaching and observation, across each course in a program. They examined the curricula from three different points: evaluation of syllabi, reports from faculty, and reports from teacher candidates. The findings of this study revealed that overall there was little formal attention to ELLs in the curricula, although candidates believed that some of the topics had been briefly addressed in their course activities. Additionally, this study brought attention to the need for teacher education programs to fully explore meaningful ways of incorporating the needs of faculty as well as those of teacher candidates. Although the results indicated that minimal attention was paid to ELLs, there was willingness, interest, and some meaningful curricular components already taking place that could enhance this preparation.

Most studies that explore teacher beliefs and views towards ELLs show that teachers hold negative views about cultural and linguistic diversity (Katz, Scott, & Hadijoamnou, 2009). Recommendations for improving teacher attitudes toward ELLs have included the need to incorporate reflective practice. Developing positive attitudes toward ELLs is essential for developing effective and appropriate teaching practices (Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, 2010). This will allow teachers to examine their assumptions about teaching ELLs. Sowa (2009) utilized action research projects to socialize teachers to the teaching of ELLs as well as help teachers develop reflective practice. By using action research projects with ELLs and reflection papers as data, the study explored the

teachers' statements about the impact of the course work and the projects on their teaching and their beliefs about teaching ELLs. The purpose of the study was to examine the ways in which conducting action research projects involving ELL helped graduate students in a large Midwestern city in the United States, gain insights into teaching linguistically diverse children and to reflect upon their teaching. Major themes that emerged from the data were a deeper understanding of ELLs, the impact of the course work (project and readings) on teaching, teacher reflection, and recognition of the need for positive teacher dispositions. In fact, all the teachers noted their experiences had made them more reflective and critical about their teaching. As far as the impact of their dispositions to teach ELLs, one teacher noted that "communicating and getting to know the student is the key to helping them learn" (p. 1030).

In teacher preparation programs across the U.S., researchers and scholars conclude that early field experiences are an effective method for providing pre-service teachers with opportunities to observe and interact with culturally and linguistically diverse students (NCATE, 2010). A common approach involves exposing teachers to linguistic diversity through internships and service learning (Fitts & Gross, 2012). Several researchers (Alfaro & Quezada, 2010; Polat, 2010; Medina et al., 2015) assert that teacher candidates who participate in study abroad programs develop greater empathy and understanding of diverse students and ELLs. Studies reveal that partnerships between universities and schools are also beneficial to helping teacher candidates develop positive dispositions toward ELLs (Riojas-Cortez & Flores, 2009). These opportunities are designed to broaden teachers' socio-cultural understanding and shape their ability to address the needs of diverse learners. Fitts and Gross's (2012) study examined the growth

of pre-service teacher candidates' beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge about school age ELLs in the context of early field experience. Data from a teacher survey revealed that participants had initially limited personal experience in interacting with culturally and linguistically diverse children. After participating in the study teachers returned from their experiences with more empathy for diverse students and ELLs.

Medina, Hathaway, and Pilonieta (2015) found similar results in their study of 16 pre-service teachers participating in a study abroad experience in Germany. Through personal reflections teachers documented their feelings about the experience. The most common elements present dealt with cultural differences, language, and customs. One of the teachers wrote, "The postal worker told me to that I had to ask for my package in German for her to give it to me. I was very confused at first. I had told her that I couldn't speak German, but she insisted that I speak German to get my package" (p. 83). Feelings of frustration, discomfort, and intimidation were common results of the teachers struggle with the language. Upon their return to the U.S. teachers were asked to think about their experiences in Germany and identify what they learned that they thought would make them better teachers of ELLs and what ideas the planned to implement in the classroom. Changes in disposition and advocacy, as well as changes in their understanding and knowledge about teaching ELLs became the focus of their attention. One of the teachers reflected, "This experience has made me realize just how hard it could be to not know the culture and language of a country and to feel like a complete "outsider". Another stressed that "No one makes fun of my ELLs; I will make sure that ALL my students understand how to respect each other" (p. 84). "I now know that it is very difficult and frustrating when you don't know the language and it is my duty to prevent this feeling and to help a

child overcome this feeling in order to learn". The findings of this study point to the fact that regardless of prior experiences with "others", studying abroad offers opportunities that can shift teachers' perceptions of "others" and potentially affect how they will teach ELL students in their future classes. The authors conclude that teacher education programs should strive to provide future teachers opportunities to study abroad and live the experience of being the "other".

Effective Schools for English Language Learners

The literature on effective schools for ELLs builds on the notion of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010). The emphasis is on building school cultures that utilizes language and linguistic diversity as an avenue to improve the social, emotional, and academic needs of students. School climate refers to the quality and character of school life. There is consensus throughout the literature that a positive school climate fosters the development and learning necessary for a productive, contributive, and satisfying life in a democratic society. This climate includes norms, values, and expectations that support feeling socially, emotionally, and physically safe (Cohen et al., 2009; Sailes 2008).

In school settings where students are appreciated and respected for who they are, they experience academic success, take pride in their work, and are less likely to drop out (Uzzell et al., 2014). In these schools, students, families, and educators work together to develop, live, and contribute to a shared school vision (Lezotte & Snyder, 2011). Educators model and nurture an attitude that emphasizes the benefits of, and satisfaction from learning. Additionally, successful schools make connecting and valuing the strengths of ELLs families a priority (Cohen et al., 2009; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011).

Each individual contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment. Heineke et al. (2012) note that when teachers, administrators, counselors, families, and community members work together they can work to improve, and promote the social, cultural, linguistic, and academic achievement of bilingual students. Furthermore, research studies have documented that co-teaching is a necessary element for improved academic achievement and ongoing school success for ELLs (DelliCarpini & Dailey, 2009). This is illustrated in Dove and Honigsfeld (2010) study, which explored the benefits of co-teaching and collaborative practices, which can lead to the emergence of teacher-leaders and enhanced student learning. Participating teachers showed a great appreciation and concern for the learning of ELLs. In this study, two educators built a successful learning environment on a foundation of shared philosophies about how children learn best and by carefully and consistently discussing and preparing lesson plans together. As a result of participation in the study, one of the teachers continues her effort to engage in joint lesson planning with fellow ESL and mainstream teachers and frequently "parallel teaches" with them so that the ELLs in her class will not miss content of skills during pull-our periods.

Cohen et al. (2009) examined the relationship between school-culture related research findings on the one hand and educational policy, practice, and teacher education. Their review of the literature on school climate reveals that a growing body of empirical research indicates that positive school climate is associated with and predictive of academic achievement, school success, effective violence prevention, students' healthy development, and teacher retention. Their review of research, practitioner, and scholarly

writing suggests four major aspects of school life that shape school climate. These include safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and environmental-structural.

Furthermore, Calderón et al., (2011) assert that the quality of instruction is what matters most in educating ELLs. Based on their review of the literature on school reform and evidence of effective practices they conclude that effective programs include four structural elements, 1) constant collection and use of ongoing formative data on learning, teaching, attendance, behavior, 2) strong focus on professional development for all staff members, including administrators, 3) standards of behavior and effective strategies for classroom and school management, 4) leadership focused on building a "high reliability organization" that shares information widely, monitors quality of teaching and learning carefully, and holds all staff responsible for progress toward shared goals. They further note, "schools that serve English learners and other language-minority children, especially in regions where most families are struggling economically, provide children with their best and perhaps only chance to achieve economic security." (p. 109). Expanding on this list of effective programs of ELLs, Stufft and Brogadir (2011) include the importance of setting high expectations for all students. Moreover, Araujo, (2009) asserts that developing a connection with students' families and cultures through culturally relevant teaching methods and curriculum is essential to the academic success of ELLs. Araujo provides a set of best practices and strategies for working and collaborating with diverse families. These include (a) incorporating funds of knowledge, (b) practicing culturally relevant teaching, (c) fostering effective communication, and (d) extending and accepting assistance.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

"Culturally responsive teaching and learning are necessary and worth pursuit" (Gay, 2010, p. 10). Hyland (2010) describes that culturally relevant teacher's share a belief that children are capable of academic excellence, which is matched with classroom practices that insure high academic performance. They view knowledge as socially constructed and teach their students to critically analyze information. Finally, learning is rooted in issues relevant to the students' lives and help students make connections between their home and community and broader national and global issues (p. 97). Gay (2010) defines culturally relevant teaching as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (p. 3).

Culturally responsive practices in schools and classrooms have been proven to be effective in addressing the academic achievement gap as well as the disproportionate representation of culturally linguistic students in special education (Griner & Stewart, 2013 & Lue, 2013; Bennett, 2013; Siwatu, 2011). It has been proven to be an effective set of principles upon which teachers can base their instruction of diverse students (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The use of culturally relevant pedagogy is a way for schools to acknowledge the home community culture of the students, and through sensitivity to culture nuances integrate these cultural experiences, values, and understandings into the teaching and environment (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Bennett, 2013). However, it has been noted by scholars and researchers that culturally responsive practices, multicultural approaches, and bilingual instruction have been largely replaced by standardized curriculum, common core standards and pedagogy from neoliberal business

model of school reform (Sleeter, 2012). Many question the value of teacher education programs and professional development for pre-service and in-service teachers is practically nonexistent (Wei, Darling-Hammond & Adamson, 2010).

Scholars concerned with the lack of teacher knowledge about culturally responsive practices have proposed strategies to assist teachers in working with and interacting with ELLs in their classrooms. An area that has received much attention is culturally responsive teaching. Proponents (e.g., Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2004) posit that culturally responsive teachers need to be non-judgmental and inclusive of the cultural backgrounds of their students in order to be effective facilitators of optimal learning in the classroom. These scholars have written extensively on the role that the intersection of home-school community culture does and should play in the delivery of instruction in schools. They further note that the discontinuity between school culture, home, and community are an important factor in low academic achievement. Consequently, the academic achievement of these students will increase if schools and teachers reflect and drawn on ELLs cultural and linguistic strengths.

The fact that teachers spend a greater amount of time on testing and following a scripted curriculum they have little time to form valuable relationships with students (Sleeter, 2012). In his essay, Sleeter mentions three factors that contribute to the marginalization of culturally responsive pedagogy: (a) persistence of faculty and simplistic conceptions of what culturally responsive pedagogy is, (b) too little research connecting its use with student achievement, and (c) elite White fear of losing national and global hegemony. She notes, “what makes more sense for teachers is to bring to the

classroom an awareness of diverse cultural possibilities that might relate to their students, but then to get to know the students themselves" (Sleeter 2012, p. 571).

Furthermore, compelling research studies demonstrate that school achievement is enhanced when protocols and programs of teaching are synchronized with the mental schema, learning styles, work habits, and background experiences of diverse ethnic groups (Gay, 2010). Several researchers argue that teachers need best practices and teaching methods to achieve culturally responsive teaching (Castro, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2009). Others feel that field experiences can help develop an increase in affirmative beliefs toward students from diverse backgrounds and an improved understanding of diversity (Castro, 2010; Wiggins, Follo, & Eberly, 2007). Bennet (2012) explored culturally relevant pedagogy through a lens of three basic tenets identified with culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The three principles are as follows: 1) teachers recognize conceptions of self and other, 2) teachers understand the significance of social interaction and promote social engagement in the classroom, and 3) teachers consider the conception of knowledge. Eight pre-service teachers enrolled in a university course participated in a field experience that included an after school tutoring program working with elementary age students from diverse backgrounds. Through interviews and reflections, teachers demonstrated a modest understanding of culturally responsive teaching. Most pre-service teachers thought they should acknowledge the different cultural background of their students and utilize those cultures to integrate into lessons. The teachers in the study had time to reflect and overtime had expanded from simple cultural awareness to a broader understanding of culturally relevant teaching. For example, one teacher said, "I think culturally responsive teaching is about teachers'

ability to connect on a deeper level with each student and to have a better understanding of the student as a person, um…not strictly based on personality, and whether they're good at one subject or another subject. But, what them who they are…". Another noted a change in her definition and understanding of culturally responsive teaching. She stated, "and it still is that you need to connect with your students in your classroom too, but I feel like more now that even if the students' aren't of a different culture, it's still important to be culturally responsive because it affects how they view other people in the future…" (p. 394). Although there are limitations to this study, it does contribute to the literature on using field experiences to produce teachers that can effectively teach in culturally responsive ways.

Social Justice and the Education of ELLs

"A commitment to social justice begins with a recognition that injustice has occurred and that we will address that injustice through the vision we create and the actions we take to ensure the success of all students" (Hirsh, 2010, p. 72). Due to the ongoing issues of social inequality in U.S. public schools, and an increase in the number of culturally and linguistic diversity among students, teacher education programs have focused their attention on preparing teacher candidates to become advocates for social justice in schools. The concept of teaching for social justice has been present in teacher education programs (Cochran-Smith, 2010), school and university partnerships, recruitment efforts, and other initiatives (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009). Too many individuals want to equate it with cultural diversity training or equal opportunity, and it is more than that (Hirsch, 2010). The definition of what it means to teach for social justice has been highly debated in teacher education programs. The term "Social Justice" has

been regarded as ambiguous without any concise definition. However, researchers in the field have been able to identify central ideas behind the theme of social justice that are and should be present in teacher education programs. According to The National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2010) description of socially just schools, they have two basic dispositions for teachers: "fairness and a belief that all children can learn". This leads to the assumption that teachers will work to adopt policy, curricular, and make instructional decisions leading to equitable learning for all students (Chubbuck, 2010).

Burrell Storms (2015) contends that infusing social justice into an action research curriculum and incorporating social justice pedagogy into the classroom can prepare teacher candidates to become advocates and advance the emancipatory goals of this form of inquiry. Storm examined teacher candidates' perceptions of how their experiences in a graduate level action research course promoted their readiness to embark on social justice advocacy. Ten teacher candidates participated in an action research course for one semester. They were six females and one male who identifies as White and one Asian female, one Hispanic female, one female who identified as other. Students used a required textbook along with being required to read articles related to social justice. Each student selected a research project of their choice. Participant responses to the action research course were very positive. They indicated that it was meaningful and relevant to their lives, helped them to become reflective about their teaching practices, and provided them with a process for social change.

As teacher education programs continue to respond to the ongoing concern of educating more sensitive, socially oriented teachers. Some colleges and universities have

made it their mission to reevaluate their programs, making efforts to help teachers develop a better understanding of diversity into curriculum, and provide a greater awareness and emphasis on multiculturalism, equity and social justice (Lynn & Smith-Maddox, 2007).

Scholars and researchers can agree that teachers that are well-prepared to face the challenges of meeting the needs of ELLs fare better; for the most part these students make great academic gains as well (Apple, 2011; Knutsen-Miller, Gomez, Strage, Knutson-Miller, & García-Nevarez, 2009; Reeves, 2009). While the knowledge that teachers gain in such programs builds their capacity to develop the skills needed to prepare students to achieve academic performance, it is unlikely that such experiences alone are sufficient to build a teacher workforce that is attentive to issues of social justice and equity. Researchers argue that teacher education programs need to embed classes where teacher candidates can reflect on practice and their personal beliefs about the students they will eventually teach.

Lynn and Smith-Maddox (2007) studied pre-service teachers engagement in an inquiry-based course at a large urban university on the West Coast of the U.S. They hypothesized that a situated learning experience such as "inquiry" would enable perspective teachers to develop pedagogical habits and skills necessary for self-directed professional growth and socialize them, individually and collectively, to participate as full partners of teaching while dialoguing about issues related to equity and social justice. After participating, teachers were asked about their experiences. Teachers expressed how a learning space such as inquiry helped them to confront their own biases and to consider critical perspectives that led to their self-actualization. One teacher stated:

> "Well, we're putting our ideas on the table. And we're helping each other, talk about the myths we may have about teaching and learning. For example, if I had an opinion about a certain ethnic group, or an attitude toward something that I didn't see as being racist prejudiced, or stereotypic, by presenting it to the inquiry group, it helped me not be colour-blind. When you're teaching you may blame the kids for not learning, but the teacher may be the problem." (p. 101).

In this type of learning context, the authors suggest that teacher education may need to concentrate on developing both a repertoire of good things to do in the classroom and multiple ways in which student teachers can articulate their misconceptions, naive thinking, hidden assumptions and prejudices, and analyze their perceptions of teaching, learning, schools, and children.

Theoharis (2007), Fraturra and Capper (2007) contend that social justice cannot be achieved without creating inclusive services. Theoharis and O'Toole (2011) explain that inclusive practices for ELLs involve valuing students' learning and positioning them and their families, languages and culture as central, integral aspects of the school community. Furthermore, Jean-Marie et al. (2009) and others agree that educational leaders are in the best position to positively affect the educational outcomes of ELLs. Scholars posit that one of the most critical attributes of effective schools for ELLs is strong school leadership (Apple, 2011; Theoharis, 2011; & Ryan, 2010). However, the concern has been whether or not school leaders are well prepared to create schools that advocate for the education of all students, in particular ELLs. As part of a national research effort to study the perceptions of practitioner, both principals and superintendents across the USA, about their leadership practices, Place et al., (2010)

found that most principals agreed that schools can longer ignore some students as they did before and that principals need to use power available to them to intervene on behalf of students. This study reaffirmed that principals have a moral obligation to intervene on behalf of all students, especially those identified as ELLs.

Theoharis's (2010) qualitative study with 6 principals illustrates that social justice in schools is necessary to create more just and equitable schools. Although they were met with resistance from teachers, they engaged in practices to disrupt four kinds of school injustices: (1) school structures that marginalize, segregate, and impede achievement, such as pull out programs; (2) a deprofessionalized teaching staff who could benefit from focused staff development; (3) a school climate that needs to be more welcoming to marginalized families and community; and (4) disparate student achievement levels. For example, these principals eliminated pull-out/ segregated programs, provided ongoing staff development on building equity, and worked to create a warm and welcoming climate. Results of this study concluded that: social justice is a must and can be achieved; that inclusive schooling is necessary and enriching component to enacting justice; that increasing staff capacity is essential to carry out a comprehensive agenda focused on equity; and that creating a climate that deeply values racial, cultural, and economic diversity is a key strategy to enacting justice in schools. Also, such efforts resulted in higher academic achievement for marginalized students. Similarly, Ryan (2010) takes it a step further and asserts that principals who want their teachers to be inclusive-minded, require additional resources for the underrepresented students, or see the need to develop equity-friendly district wide policies may have no choice but to play the political game. In his study, Ryan explored ways in which principals use their political understanding to

promote social justice in their schools. Employing face-face interviews with 28 principals who had worked in a variety of schools, the study examined the principals' efforts to understand their political contexts, the way they employ their knowledge in the strategies they used, and the ways in which they strategically monitor their actions as they worked toward equity. This study concluded that principals need to acknowledge the importance of engaging in political activity in their organizations. More importantly, they need to combine their intellect and strategic abilities with personal and social qualities like courage, boldness and care if they are to move their social justice agendas.

Conclusion

This literature review illustrates how our educational system has evolved in relation to the growing number of ELLs in U.S. public schools. Today, ELLs continue to be a big part of the school community and data indicates that eventually ELLs will be the majority. According to the Center on Educational Policy (2010) ELLs are the fastest growing population in U.S. public school students are ELLs. Although we are more aware of what ELLs need, our schools continue to fall short in providing ELLs with a fair and equitable education. The literature on the issues of social justice clearly advocates for the need to develop a teaching workforce that is committed and sensitive to the needs of culturally diverse students. Theoharis (2010) posits that social justice is a must and should be achieved; that inclusive schooling is necessary and enriching component to enacting justice; that increasing staff capacity is essential to carry out a comprehensive agenda focused on equity; and that creating a climate that deeply values racial, cultural, and economic diversity is a key strategy to enacting justice in schools. There is a gap in the literature that needs to be addressed. We need to engage in conversations that move

beyond techniques and recommendations of best practices to inquiring into how individuals in a school view their role in working with ELLs. Although there is agreement among scholars that the principal is able to enact social justice within a school; there is a need to challenge other worldviews about what is just and right to meet the needs of ELLs. This study attempts to fill in the gaps that exist in the literature by looking at how teachers, counselors, and administrators define their role in working with ELLs.

Chapter 3

Methods

The purpose of this study will be to explore how teachers, administrators, and counselors describe their role in working with ELLs. As the number of ELLs continues to increase in schools across the U.S., it is important to have a continuous dialogue about the impact of educational reform on linguistically and culturally diverse students. I enter this study with the hope of raising the consciousness of teachers, administrators, and counselors to reflect on their role in developing inclusive practices for ELLs. In order to accomplish this, I interviewed nine participants to understand from their lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994) how they define their role in working with ELLs.

I chose a qualitative research approach because it allows me to study things in a natural setting, attempt to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Phenomenology, an approach within qualitative traditions (Creswell, 2007), guided my investigation of how individuals in a school setting describe their role in working with ELLs. Phenomenological research studies primarily focus on the essence and structure of an experience that is shared by individuals in a setting. A phenomenological method is selected for this study because of its ability to produce significant data through in-depth-interviews that can then be utilized to understand a phenomenon and to assist in making decisions that will enhance the learning of ELLs.

Research Questions

The main research question that guides this study was grounded in the central tenets of social justice. The following question was designed to gain an understanding of the meanings and experiences of the study participants: How do administrators, teachers, and counselors describe their roles in working with ELLs? This is followed by the following sub question: How do administrators, teachers, and counselors describe the benefits and challenges in working with ELLs?

This chapter provides a description of the phenomenological qualitative method of inquiry I utilized to explore how teachers, counselors, and administrators define their role in working with ELLs. In addition, I have included details about the setting, participants, and qualitative instruments that used in data collection.

Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative research is primarily concerned with the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups of people ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2007). Shank (2006) sums up three basic tenets within qualitative research. First, the *researcher matters*. The researchers are not merely gatherers of information; they are an active part of the process itself. Their actions, interpretations, and decisions are often an integral part of the research procedures and the research findings as well. He further states that qualitative research is often grounded and shaped by issues of culture, society, history, gender, and the like. Second, *inquiry into meaning is in the service of understanding* not just to build theories and other generalizations about knowledge; often researchers have critical agendas as well. Qualitative researchers go beyond trying to understand what they see. They also seek to change things for the better.

The final tenet is that *qualitative inquiry embraces new ways of looking at the world* (p. 10).

The tenets described above provide the significance of this study in a broader context. An understanding of how teachers, counselors, and administrators define their roles in working with ELLs can help to address the exclusionary, discriminatory ideologies that continue to persist in our educational system. The historically marginalized, the poor, minority, and English language learners, remain largely ignored. The tenets described above align with the purpose of this study, which is to enlighten others about the critical role of ensuring access and equity for a fair education for all students, in particular ELLs.

According to Moustakas (2001), qualitative inquiry begins with the internal search to discover, with an encompassing puzzlement, and a passionate desire to know, devotion, and commitment to pursue a question that is strongly connected to one's own identity and selfhood. Since I am highly committed to the advancement of educational access for ELLs, a qualitative research design seemed appropriate in answering the research question of how teachers, administrators, and counselors describe their roles in working with ELLs.

This research study employed a phenomenological qualitative research design (Creswell, 2007; Schram, 2003) to explore how principals, teachers, and counselors describe their roles in working with ELLs. From a phenomenological perspective, this study focused on a small group of individual's experiences as they are lived every day, viewing these experiences as conscious (Van Manen, 1990). Ultimately, arriving at a description of these experiences, rather than explanations or analyses (Moustakas, 1994)

from the standpoint of a concept or phenomena. The goal in phenomenology is to grasp and elucidate the meaning, structure, and essence of lived experience of a phenomenon for a person or a group of people (Patton, 2002).

According to Gibbs (2008) qualitative research is intended to approach the world "out there" (not in specialized research settings such as laboratories) and to comprehend, describe and at times explain social phenomena "from the inside" (Gibbs, 2008). Creswell (2009) describes qualitative research as a "means for exploring and understanding how individual or groups attribute to a social or human problem" (p. 4). As such, the insights derived from the data take the reader into the time and place where individual experiences occurred. They capture and communicate someone else's experience of the world in his or her own words (Patton, 2002). Phenomenological researchers ask the question: what is the essence of this phenomenon as experienced by an individual, and what does it mean to them? (Polit & Beck, 2004).

Context of the Study

This study will take place at Star Gate High School (a pseudonym), a 9-12 school, which is centrally located between a suburban and an urban school districts in Southern New Jersey. The school district is comprised of eight elementary schools, one junior high, one middle school, and a high school. There is a total enrollment of 4, 300 students in the district. An estimated 1,340 students are enrolled in the high school. Star Gate High School is a Title I school. Title I schools are defined by the number of students that receive free or reduced lunch program. Schools where at least 40% of the student body is enrolled in the free or reduced lunch program (New Jersey Department of Education, 2012).

Star Gate high school is racially and economically diverse. It has a racial composition of approximately 47% Hispanic, 32% Black, 15% White, and 6% Asian (Genesis, 2016). During the current school year (2015-2016) an estimated, 85% of the student body receives free and/or reduced lunch. An estimated 80% of the students speak another language other than English at home. Spanish is the predominant language spoken in many households. In the year 2014-2015, there was an estimated enrollment of about 1,364 students in grades 9-12. Forty - three percent were identified as ESL students. These students range in classification as beginners (no English), intermediate (some English) and advanced levels (Proficient). Over the years, this school has experienced a steady increase in the number of ELL learners. For example, during this current school year (2015-2016) there over 65 (5.19%) students in the ESL program compared to 3.4% the previous year (Genesis, 2016).

This school has 119 teachers on staff. The teaching staff consists of 92% Caucasian, 4% Black, 1% Hispanic, and 3% other (Genesis, 2016). The district employs six counselors, three Caucasian, two African American, and one Hispanic. There are two bilingual staff members, one a counselor and one world language teacher. They both speak English and Spanish and can communicate with the students and families. Through personal conversions, several faculty members have expressed that the school needs to dedicate more time, resources, and support for ELLs.

I chose this school because it is representative of the landscape of many schools around the nation. In addition, as an employee of the district, I have access to staff members for this study. Additionally, from personal experience, the gradual increase in the number of ELLs in the district; particularly at the high school has been a cause of

concern. The steady increase in the number of ELLs is significant and like many schools, this high school may be unprepared to deal with the complex diverse academic and language needs of these students. In this school, ELLs receive one period of ESL and one period of English each day. ELLs attend general education classes for the remainder of the day with no language support. The needs and supports of ELLs in this school is a highly debated topic. Many teachers appear divided about whether it is their role to serve as language development teachers in general education classrooms. Through personal contact with several general education teachers, many have expressed a desire to provide better instructional support to ELLs. Furthermore, many have expressed frustration at not being able to meet the needs of ELLs because they lack the necessary training and/or support to instruct them. The ELLs at this school receive no additional academic or language support outside of their respective ESL classes. It is worth noting that in the (2014-2015) school year out of 36 ELLs in the school 20 failed one or more of their general education classes (Genesis, 2016).

Participants

For this study, I chose to use a purposeful sample to "intentionally select individuals and sites to learn and understand the central phenomena" (Creswell, 2012, p. 206). Patton (2002) stated that purposeful sampling is ideal because it includes a sampling that is "information rich" and illuminative, that is, they offer useful manifestations of the phenomena of interest; sampling, then is aimed at insight about the phenomenon, not empirical generalizations from a sample to a population (p. 40).

Qualitative research typically focuses on relatively small samples, selected purposefully to permit inquiry into and understanding of a phenomenon "in depth" (Patton, 2002, p. 46). Creswell (1998) recommends interviews with up to 10 participants for a phenomenological study; therefore, a sample size of nine seemed reasonable for this study. I conducted interviews with nine (N= 9) participants. I included four (n = 4) teachers from various disciplines (Math, Science, Social Studies, and English). One (n = 1) counselor, 3 (n = 3) administrators, and one (n = 1) ESL teacher. The selection of these nine participants allowed me to attain rich and thick data focused on a small group that represents a cross section of the school population. See table 1 for an overview of the demographic information that each participant reported.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Position	Ethnicity	Language(s) Spoken	Degree	Years Teaching
Mr. Albert	Principal	African American	English	Masters/Secondary English Certification	25
Ms. Bee	Assistant Principal	African American	English	Masters Educational Leadership/K-8 Teaching Certification	24

Table 1 (continued)

Participant	Position	Ethnicity	Language(s) Spoken	Degree	Years Teaching
Mr. Castro	Assistant Principal	Hispanic	English/ Spanish	Masters Educational Leadership	30
Mr. Deer	Counselor	Caucasian	English	Masters Student Personnel	33
Ms. Ellen	ESL Teacher	Caucasian	English	ESL Certification Bachelors Secondary Education	10
Ms. Far	English	Caucasian	English	Bachelor of Science Language Arts	9
Mr. Gray	History Teacher	Caucasian	English	Masters Arts	13
Mr. Holmes	Science Teacher	Caucasian	English	Bachelors/ Science	20
Ms. Iris	Math	Caucasian	English	Masters/Math	19

I selected nine research participants for this study based on the following criteria: General education teachers from the four academic disciplines (English, math, science, and social studies that teach ELLs were invited to participate. Additionally, in order to explore and gain multiple perspectives from the school community a former ESL counselor, grade level administrators (9-12), and an ESL teacher were included in the study. In phenomenological studies, the selection of participants needs to be carefully chosen to be individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon being explored, and can articulate their lived experience (Creswell, 2007). These nine participants are deemed appropriate because they have experienced the same phenomenon and secondly, they can articulate their own unique perspectives based on their current positions. Through purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002), I can gain an understanding of how teachers, administrators, counselor, and ESL teacher describe their role in working with ELLs.

Qualitative Data Collection

In phenomenological studies, the most common method of data collection consists of in-depth interviews with participants (Creswell, 2007). Additional sources of data include narratives from interviews, diaries and protocols, participant observation, and reflective diaries or researcher's own introspective accounts.

Phenomenology can include single or multiple interviews with participants (Creswell, 2007). In this study, the primary source of data collection included verbal responses from single interviews with each participant. A researcher journal and field notes from an interview protocol was used throughout the research. The researcher journal and field notes served to provide a detailed account of time on-site, and in

transcription and analysis phase. Throughout the research process, I intended to chronicle my own thinking, feelings, experiences, and perceptions by way of a researcher journal.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviewing, according to Seidman (2006), allows people to freely share their stories. Patton (2002) suggests that to get deeper meanings and preserve context, face- to-face interaction is both "necessary and desirable" (p. 49). Semi- structured interviews were conducted within a 3-week period at the Star Gate High School (pseudonym). This will include 30 - 45-minute interviews with each participant. These interviews were conducted face- to- face in a private location within the school. The personal interviews allowed me the opportunity to have an in-depth conversation about participants' experience, ideas, notions, and how they describe their roles in working with ELLs.

Semi-structured interviews were used in this study because it fosters an authentic relationship between interviewer and interviewee (Creswell, 2007). In phenomenological studies, interviewing is well suited for the exploration of the perceptions and opinions of respondents regarding sensitive issues and enables probing as a way to gather further information and clarification of answers (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The topics covered in the interviews were guided by the research question and the literature. McNamara's (2009) recommendations was used to develop questions that would engage the participant in an open dialogue with me. He recommends the following: (a) wording should be open-ended (respondents should be able to choose their own terms when answering questions; (b) questions should be neutral as possible (avoid wording that might influence answers, e.g., evocative, judgmental wording); (c) questions should be asked one at a time; (d)

questions should be worded clearly (this includes knowing any terms particular to the program or respondents' culture); and (e) be careful asking "why" questions.

The construction of an interview protocol as noted by Creswell (2007) enabled me to take notes during the interview about the responses of the interviewee. It also aided in guiding and organizing my thoughts on items such as, headings, information about the starting interview, concluding ideas, information on ending the interview, and thanking the respondent. An interview protocol (see Appendix A) was designed to include open-ended questions, with ample space to write responses to the interviewee's comments. The interview protocol allowed the researcher to reflect on aspects that might not be adequately represented in the recording and transcription (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

McNamara's (2009) principles to an effective interview were used prior to conducting interviews, to establish rapport and to maximize time with participants. This was accomplished by, (1) selecting a setting with little distraction; (2) explain the purpose of the interview; (3) address confidentiality; (4) explain the format of the interview; (5) indicate how long the interview will take; (6) tell them how to get in touch with you later if they want to; (7) ask them if they have any questions before you both get started with the interview; and (8) don't count on your memory to recall their answers. All participants were provided with an informed consent (See Appendix B).

All interviews were taped-recorded, then transcribed into narrative text, and data was analyzed using phenomenological methods outlined by Moustakas (1994). In order to establish the validity of the transcripts (Kvale, 2009, Janesick, 2004) member checks were conducted. Therefore, participants were provided with a copy of the verbatim

transcripts after the interview to check for accuracy (MacLean, Meyer & Stable, 2004) and asked to return them with any changes.

Researcher Journal

Traditionally, what researchers bring to their study from their backgrounds and identities has been regarded as "bias", such influence needs to be eliminated from the design, rather than a valuable component (Maxwell, 2008 p. 225). However, one's identity and experience in a study has been regarded as valuable information that can be considered in analysis of the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Jansen & Peshkin, 1992). Maxwell (2008) posits that using this experience in one's research can provide a major source of insights, hypotheses, and validity checks. He also asserts that this is not a license to impose one's assumptions and values uncritically on the research.

In phenomenological studies, it is important for the researcher to be aware of his or her own stance toward the phenomenon under study (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, the use of a researcher journal allowed me to reflect on my personal thoughts, biases, and interpretations throughout my interviews and field experiences. Most importantly, it made my position transparent to the readers and bring to consciousness the different aspects of how my personal experiences have influenced my choice of topic, decisions regarding what I choose to focus on, and in selecting the data for analysis and the interpretation of that data. As noted by Maxwell (2008), a researcher journal can generate unexpected insights and connections, as well as create a valuable record of the research process. Janesick (2004) uses the metaphor of a reflective journal as a method for "checks and balances" during the entire research process (p. 149). According to Morrow and Smith (2000), the use of a

researcher journal adds rigor to qualitative research inquiry as the researcher can record his or her reactions, assumptions, expectations, and biases about the research process.

Field Notes

In qualitative research, field notes or "memoing" is considered an essential data source (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Throughout the course of this research, I recorded my own thoughts, experiences, and what I observe throughout collecting and reflecting on the process. According to Lofland and Lofland (1999) field notes by the researcher are crucial in qualitative research to retain data gathered during interviews. During the interviewing process, field notes served to keep the researcher focused on what the participants share (Seidman, 2006), as well as to record my own thoughts and feelings. Bailey (1996) further recommends that researchers write descriptive and reflective notes, such as, hunches, impressions, feelings and so forth. Miles and Huberman (1984) emphasize that field notes should be dated so that the researcher can later correlate them with the data that has been collected. I took field notes during all interviews on the interview protocol to capture my observations, which may include my personal and subjective responses to and interpretations of each encounter (Saldaña, 2009).

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Coffey and Atkinson (1996) regard analysis as a systematic procedure that assists researchers in identifying essential features and relationships with the data. It is a way of transforming the data through interpretation. Merriam (1998) and Marshall and Rossman (1989) contend that data collection and data analysis must be a simultaneous process in qualitative research. Gibbs (2008) recommends that qualitative researchers use early data as a way of raising new research issues and questions. The flexibility involved in this

process allows analysis to begin early even before interviews, or other data that is collected.

Patton (1980) states:

> The data generated by qualitative methods are voluminous. I have found no way of preparing students for the sheer massive volumes of information, which they will find themselves confronted when data collection has ended. Sitting down to make sense out of pages of interviews and whole files of field notes can be overwhelming. (p. 297)

In order to make sense of the data, I followed Moustakas's (1994) steps to data analysis. This included the following: Organizing the data into file folders, index cards, or computer files. I continued by initially reading through the data, making notes in the margins of the documents, developing initial codes, followed by reducing the information to significant statements or quotes and combining them into themes. During the process of coding, classifying, and developing themes, I began to "make sense of the data" and "interpret" the codes and themes to the significance of the data. Next, I described the essence of the phenomenon "what participants experienced" and "how they experienced it in terms of the conditions, situations, or context. The final step includes a narrative description of the "essence" of the experience in tables, figures, or discussion. Agar (1980), for example, suggests that researchers "read the transcripts in its entirety several times. Immerse yourself in the details, trying to get a sense of the interview as a whole before breaking it into parts" (p. 103). Creswell (2007) suggests that researchers write memos within the margins of field notes or transcripts that help in exploring the data. The memos

are short phrases, ideas, or keys concepts that occur to the reader. According to Creswell (2009), self-memos "facilitate reflection and analytic insight".

Data Analysis Procedure

Moustakas's (1994) phenomenological method was employed in analyzing participants' transcripts. Moustakas's approach was chosen because it has specific steps in the data analysis procedure and guidelines for assembling the textural "what participants experienced" and structural "how they experienced the phenomenon" descriptions. The following steps were followed:

1. Bracketing or Epoche – Phenomenological reduction
2. Delineating units of meaning
3. Clusters of units of meanings into themes
4. Assemble a narrative description of what they experienced (textural description) and how they experienced in to (structural description)
5. The two descriptions in step four were combined to describe the "essence" of their experience.

Each step is furthered described below.

Bracketing

Bracketing (or epoche) is the process by which a researcher suspends his/her own presuppositions and not allow their own meanings and interpretations or theoretical concepts to enter the unique world of the participant (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). In order to explore the research phenomenon, any biases, and preconceptions were set aside, as well as any previous knowledge or experiences will be bracketed and placed within the context of the study. For example, in Chapter 1, I included a discussion on my

positionality, which talks, about my personal journey with this phenomenon. In phenomenological studies, an awareness of one's stance toward the phenomenon is critical therefore, this process will be kept constant throughout the research study.

Delineating Units of Meaning

During this phase, significant statements or words were extracted from the data that are seen to be related to the researched phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). The lists of units are carefully reviewed, and redundant units are eliminated (Moustakas, 1994). This is accomplished by considering the number of times (the significance) a word was mentioned. I went through the data (e.g. transcripts and other data sources) and highlight "significant statements", sentences, or quotes that provide an understanding of how teachers, administrators, and counselor define their role in working with ELLs. I engaged in this iterative process until the meaning from the participants becomes clearly defined. After eliminating the redundant units and statements, the remaining statements were clustered into themes and organized into a coherent textural description for the next step in the process.

Clustering of Meanings into Themes

During this step I returned to the transcripts, look at the themes more closely, and identify situations or contexts in which the themes appeared (Creswell, Hanson, Plano & Morales, 2007). Clusters of themes are typically formed by grouping units of meaning together (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994) and the researcher identifies significant topics. Significant statements were grouped into larger units of information; called "meaning units" or themes. These meaning units came directly from the statement's participants make regarding the phenomenon during the interviews. After multiple

readings, redundant meanings or statements unrelated to the topic were discarded. From this process, the remaining statements were clustered into themes and organized into the textural and structural description.

Textural and Structural Description

In this step, I took significant statements and themes to write a description of what the participants experienced (textural description). I also used these statements to write a description of the context or setting that influenced how the participants experienced the phenomenon, referred to as imaginative variation or (structural description) (Creswell, 2007). This included verbatim examples from the transcript interviews.

Description of the Overall Essence of the Experience

From the synthesis of the structural and textural descriptions, I wrote a narrative that reflected the context from which the themes emerged (Moustakas, 1994 and Creswell, 1998). In the end, this phenomenological study presented a description of the experiences of each participant and their common, as well as their individual differences of how they define their role in working with ELLs. The ultimate goal is to have readers walk away with the feeling, "I understand better what it is like for someone to experience that" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 46).

Coding the Data

Saldaña's (2009) strategy of in vivo coding was applied to the interviews, my researcher journal, and field notes. In vivo codes are statements, words, or phrases that are taken directly from what participants say and are placed in quotation marks. After reading through the interview transcripts, field notes, and researcher journal, I kept close attention to words and phrases that seemed to call for bolding, underlining, and italicizing, highlighting, or vocal emphasis if spoken aloud. In vivo codes, "can provide a crucial check on whether you have grasped what is significant to the participant and may help "crystallize and condense meanings" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57). Saldaña (2009) recommends that researchers keep track of codes that are participant inspired rather than "researcher generated" by always putting in vivo codes in quotation marks. The use of in vivo coding along with the data analysis presented by Moustakas (1994) is an appropriate method because it allowed me to immerse myself in the language, perspectives, and viewpoints of my participants.

According to Defelice and Janesick (2015) phenomenological research requires interviews, multiple re-readings of collected text and multiple interactions with the text. The process of collecting, creating, and analyzing the data can be challenging. In their article Understanding the Marriage of Technology and Phenomenological Research: From Design to Analysis they recommend the following programs Audacity, Express Scribe, Microsoft Word, and Excel to reduce and analyze the data. They posit that these programs help to preserve the essence of the phenomenological process and gives the researcher the opportunity to expand time and learning about the lived experience of the participants. As such, I followed the procedures outline by these authors to assist in

reducing and making sense of the data. First, the recorded interviews were converted into an mp3 file, and then opened using Audacity. Audacity is an audio-editing program that will enable me to remove sections, which are not relevant to the study, loop parts and export finished work as mp3 files. After completion, the mp3 files were imported into Express Scribe a transcription program. This program allowed me to efficiently and accurately complete the transcription process by slowing down the speed making transcribing easier and more efficient. Next, I copied and paste sections from express scribe into Microsoft Word and save it as an additional backup to my work.

Ethical Considerations

Creswell (2009) notes that in anticipation of data collection, researchers need to respect the participants and the sites for research. As such, the participants in this study were assured confidentiality. All transcripts were free of all identifying information. The researcher protected the anonymity of the participants by using pseudonyms to refer to each participant. In addition, an informed consent form was used to address the following: the nature and goal of the study; confidentiality; and brief explanation of the study. At the beginning of each interview, participants were given information about the study and permission to record. They were informed that participation is voluntary, and they may withdraw at any time. All recordings were stored in an Apple iPhone then transferred to the researcher's personal computer with a secured password. All transcripts, field notes, and researcher's journal were secured in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office. The recordings and transcripts used pseudonyms and all identifiers were removed when written up.

Ensuring Rigor in the Study

Regardless of the approach to inquiry, a qualitative researcher can encounter ethical issues that surface during data collection in the field and in analysis and dissemination of qualitative reports (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, methodological rigor was attained through the application of reliability, validity, and transferability (Creswell, 2009).

Validation

According to Creswell (2009) qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures. In phenomenological studies, Polkinghorne (1989) refers to validation as an idea that is well grounded and well supported. He asks, "Does the general structural description provide an accurate portrait of the common features and structural connections that are manifest in the examples collected? (p. 57).

After each interview, member checks were conducted to verify the accuracy of what participants shared with me during their interviews. Similarly, conducting member checks can help validate themes (Van Manen, 1990) and to check the accuracy of specific descriptions with participants (Creswell, 2009) about their experiences of the phenomena (Doyle, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this study, participants were given the opportunity to read the transcripts to ensure that they have been accurately recorded and therefore credible. This allowed them to acknowledge and comment on the findings.

Triangulation involves the researcher making use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). In this study, data obtained from multiple participants

were used to build a coherent justification for themes (Creswell, 2009). Additionally, this process involved corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective, researcher journal, interview transcripts, and field notes. According to Creswell and Plano (2011) triangulation between participant interviews, researcher journal, and field notes can help to reduce the threats to internal and external validity.

Clarification of researcher bias is important so that readers understand the researcher's position and any biases or assumptions that impact the inquiry (Merriam, 1998). Creswell (2009) asserts that self-reflection creates an open and honest narrative that will resonate well with readers. As such, I maintained a personal journal that included accounts of how the researcher's background, such as, culture, and personal interests brought them to the research and demonstrate how decisions were made throughout the research process. In order to fully describe how participants, view the phenomenon, as recommended by Creswell (2007) the researcher bracketed out, as much as possible, their own experience.

Reliability

To ensure reliability in this study, three techniques outlined by (Creswell, 2007) were employed in this study. First, the researcher provided a detailed account of the procedures of data analysis in phenomenology, such as (Moustakas, 1994), provide thick description of the experience, the context from which it occurred, and the researcher's role (reflexivity). Second, triangulation or multiple methods of data collection and analysis were used, which helped to strengthen the study's reliability as well as internal validity (Merriam, 1988).

Maintaining a personal journal can be an important expression of reflexivity (Patton, 1990). Through 'epoche' or bracketing the researcher attempted to put out of action the general position which belongs to the essence of the natural attitude (Husserl, 1993). Therefore, in this study, I consciously attempted to describe the phenomenon as it is experienced by the participants as free and unprejudiced as possible, so that it can be clearly understood and described (Dowling, 2007). This reflexive journal included highlights of how my personal history and personal interests brought me to the research and demonstrated how the theoretical perspective impacted the data collection and the research process (Van Manen, 1990).

Transferability

In qualitative studies, transferability lies in demonstrating that the results of the study can be applied to a wider population. Merriam (1998) posits that it is "concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations" (p. 39). Shenton (2005) argues that it is nearly impossible to demonstrate that the findings and conclusions are applicable to other situations and populations. However, Stake (1995) suggests that, although each case may be unique, it is an example within a broader group and, as a result, the prospect of transferability should not be rejected.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend that researchers provide sufficient contextual description about the site which will enable the reader to determine transferability. Therefore, I provided detailed information about the research site, in addition to providing a rich, thick description of the phenomenon of how teachers, administrators, and counselors view their role in working with ELLs. With such detailed description, the researcher enables the readers to transfer information to other settings

and to determine whether the findings can be transferred "because of shared characteristics" (Erlandson et al., 1993, P. 32). Additionally, a rich and rigorous presentation of the findings, together with direct quotations, also helps to enhance transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For example, the researcher provided detailed and appropriate descriptions so that readers could make informed decisions regarding the applicability of the findings to specific contexts. The purpose of qualitative research, including this study, is to gain in depth knowledge about how individuals in a school setting view their roles in working with ELLs, not knowledge that can be generalized (Creswell, 2007).

Chapter 4

Findings

How Participants Describe Their Roles with ELLs

Research question one focused on how administrators, teachers, and counselors define their role in working with ELLs. The theoretical framework for this phenomenological study draws on the tenets of social justice theory by Theoharis (2007). The data revealed that participants, comprised of five teachers, one counselor, and three administrators, viewed their role exclusively based on their respective positions at the school. The counselor and ESL teacher were the only educators in the building who expressed a willingness to extend themselves beyond their everyday responsibilities to advocate on behalf of the ELLs. Five themes were revealed in the data analysis: (a) advocate, (b) disposition of empathy and support, (c) teaching content, (d) disciplinarian.

Advocating on Behalf of ELLs

The counselor and the ESL teacher were the only study participants who took steps toward advocating for the ELLs at the school. The counselor regarded ELLs with much respect and considered ELLs some of his closest students. “Over time, they have become possibly some of the best students in our building. I’m talking about academically; socially just well-rounded students and they have worked hard to achieve such status. Many are so appreciative” (Mr. Deer, interview transcription, 10/24/16). Mr. Deer also explained how as the ELL counselor he served as the students’ “go to person” Mr. Deer was the assigned counselor responsible for ELLs in the school. He served in this position for 10 years until 2012 when the district hired a bilingual counselor. He noted that it is a major responsibility to think and respond to ELLs in the most efficient

and appropriate manner. Mr. Deer is monolingual, and this limited in his ability to communicate with his ELLs. He stated, "My role was to think of and prepare and put students in the best setting that I could" (Mr. Deer, interview transcription, 10/24/16). During his time as the ELL counselor, he described how he worked closely with the school's former ESL teacher. He would often meet with her to discuss student needs and academic progress.

Mr. Deer also acknowledged his own lack of understanding on issues related to ELLs: "It's a big challenge because I don't walk in their shoes. So, I'm trying to capture how they're feeling, understanding how they're feeling and explaining it to someone that isn't seeing it firsthand. What's even more difficult is to explain the level of frustration that ELLs experience to administration, it is difficult" (Mr. Deer, interview transcription, 10/24/16). Although Mr. Deer is monolingual and lacked a full understanding of issues faced by ELLs, this did not deter him from taking on the role of advocate. He described this role as challenging and at times frustrating; however, his genuine concern toward ELLs made him more determined. For example, Mr. Deer attempted to challenge the status quo by directly approaching administration with his concerns about the academic and personal struggles faced by ELLs at the school (Mr. Deer, interview transcription, 10/24/2016).

Ms. Ellen, the school's only ESL teacher, expressed her frustration and desire to secure more resources and support for ELLs. Ms. Ellen was hired as a 9th grade language arts teacher in 2006. After two years, she was reassigned to teach ESL. She has been teaching ESL in the district for 10 years. She explained:

I have asked for resources and I don't really have any; that is why I'm here making copies of anything I have to use. I don't have a textbook that is realistic to use. I don't have online subscriptions to help the kids, the technology is not set up. I'm one of the last classrooms in the building that doesn't have a mounted Smartboard (Ms. Ellen, interview transcription, 12/2/16).

Furthermore, Ms. Ellen. stated, "I go to the principal …. There have been many glitches in that" (Ms. Ellen, interview transcription, 12/2/16). The "glitches" referred to her concerns about how some leaders in the building, such as the supervisor of language arts, administrators, and superintendent's office, dismissed her appeals to access resources for ELLs at the school. By appealing to the principal first, Ms. Ellen hoped it would expedite bringing in the necessary materials and resources she desperately wanted for the ELLs in her classroom. However, her appeal to the principal was met with resistance and no follow through.

Aside from the counselor and the ESL teacher, there were two general education teachers who directly talked about advocating on behalf of ELLs. For example, Mr. Holmes, who taught science, shared how he directly approached his supervisor and administrators asking for textbooks in Spanish. Unfortunately, his request was denied. "In this class we have textbooks [that are available by the publisher] in Spanish and in other languages. I was asking the supervisor and administrators if I could purchase copies, so the students could recognize the content but unfortunately it was declined" (Mr. Holmes, interview transcription, 10/4/16). He was given the following reason that teachers needed to continue working with ELLs on their English language through his content instruction. In his words, he "was extremely disappointed" (Mr. Holmes, interview transcription,

10/4/2016). In a similar example, Mr. Gray, a social studies teacher, explained how he approached the topic of textbooks at a department meeting. "Yes, I have brought it to my department. To be honest, our department is short on textbooks, [but] I know Spanish versions exist. If we could have a certain number of Spanish volumes that would be great" (Mr. Gray, interview transcription, 10/17/16). Even though Mr. Gray made the effort to ask administrators for resources, he was unable to secure history books in Spanish for his ELL students.

None of the three administrators who participated in the study directly spoke about ways they could advocate on behalf of ELLs at the school or at the district level. One of the administrators said, "In most cases if an ELL comes to me is because there's a bump in the road. I would say typically that is what it looks like for me" (Mr. Albert, interview transcription, 9/30/16). Mr. Albert is the school's lead administrator who is responsible for making sure the school is operating in the most efficient manner. His responsibilities include student discipline and overseeing curriculum and instruction. The above comment by Mr. Albert, the school's main administrator, provides evidence of how ELLs did not appear to be a priority at this school. Although principals could articulate what was wrong with the school system and had some understanding of what ELLs needed, there were no mention of a plan to attain the appropriate academic support for ELLs at the school or district level. For example, Ms. Bee another administrator noted, "personally I think we could utilize more bilingual and ESL programs. I would like to see more bilingual teachers" (Ms. Bee, interview transcription, 10/31/2016). Mr. Castro. added, "we need more technology, ELLs need more exposure, students going out

and having different experiences, parent involvement, and presentations with guest speakers" (Mr. Castro, interview transcription, 10/14/2016).

Ms. Bee's and Mr. Castro's comments provided an example of how the school was failing to support ELLs. Most notably, they both expressed what type of supports were needed at the school and district level; however, there was no mention of advocating on behalf of ELLs. Furthermore, taking on the role of advocate was either difficult or nonexistent among all participants. For instance, Ms. Iris, a math teacher, stated that she had not thought about it or had any idea of how to address this. When I asked if things should be brought up in department meetings she stated, "You are right it should be brought up. I think the teachers that are frustrated should do that. I have never thought of bringing it up because it has worked out for me" (Ms. Iris, interview transcription, 10/25/16). Ms. Iris shared that, unlike other teachers, she had developed strategies to work with ELLs and spoke some Spanish to assist ELLs with content. Ms. Iris's feelings about the role of advocacy was based on her own personal experiences as a teacher. She felt confident because of her previous successes in teaching ELLs, therefore she had not considered bringing other teachers' concerns to department meetings.

Disposition of Empathy and Support

Some participants articulated a disposition of empathy and support toward ELL students. Providing a solid support system for ELLs is important not just for their academic success, but also for their social and emotional development (Cohen et al., 2009; Theohari & O'Toole, 2011). For example, Ms. Iris, a math teacher, displayed empathy and support toward ELLs inability to communicate in English. She stated:

> Last year I had a significant number of Latino students in my classroom, so I got myself an English/Spanish dictionary. I did have some Spanish in high school and in college, so I knew a few words. Their face when you could explain something to them and they could do the work. That you could sit with them and try to teach even if it with mixed English and Spanish, amazing (Ms. Iris, interview transcription, 10/5/16).

Ms. Iris's empathy toward her ELL students' language barriers in communicating and understanding content prompted her to seek ways to accommodate their needs. She described purchasing an English/Spanish dictionary to communicate and support ELLs in understanding content. Her desire to create an environment of acceptance and support gave ELLs the tools to experience academic success.

Mr. Holmes, a science teacher, was another teacher that expressed having a deep compassion for ELLs and their struggles. This may be connected to Mr. Holmes's experience as an immigrant from England. He acknowledged how difficult it is to navigate the system, to understand the rules and the culture of a school in the U.S.

> When I [Mr. Holmes] first arrived from Europe to a school in the U.S. I felt isolated from the rest of the general population. It was difficult for me. Like me, ELLs at this school are unable to find their own way, they don't know how to integrate and are unable to communicate with people from different backgrounds. At this school, there is less emphasis on working to help Ells to successfully integrate into the school setting (Mr. Holmes, interview transcription, 10/4/16).

Mr. Holmes's positive disposition toward ELLs was connected to his own personal experience as an immigrant entering the country for the first time. He described

how difficult it was for him to acclimate to a new environment and how he felt isolated from the rest of the population. As such, he was more empathetic and supportive toward ELLs as they worked to navigate through a school system that appeared less welcoming or supportive.

Both Ms. Iris and Mr. Holmes had a caring disposition toward ELLs and responded to them with respect and support. They attempted to make connections with their ELL students, and carefully guided them through understanding content. Engendering caring attitudes is essential for ELLs to grow, feel connected, and enables them to succeed academically (DelliCarpini & Dailey, 2009; Nelson & Guerra, 2014; Rios-Aguilar et al., 2010).

The teachers in this study acknowledged that the school had not established a program for academic support for ELLs. Ms. Iris stated: "I don't think [the school] supports [students] as much as we should. In our school, I think we sometimes lean more toward the majority than the minority. I think that's like everything else in life" (Ms. Iris, interview transcription, 10/5/16). Thus, teachers in this study offered extra help after school, paired ELLs with other bilingual students for academic support, and showing sensitivity toward the circumstances that ELLs found themselves in (Fieldnotes, 10/5/2016). For example, Ms. Iris talked about making accommodations for ELLs in math by considering their English levels and excluding beginner ELLs from word problems until they had a better understanding of the English language (Ms. Iris, interview transcription, 10/5/2016). Ms. Iris's empathetic response to the needs of ELLs by excluding them from word problems showed her interest in making it possible for ELLs to meet with academic success.

Most of the teachers mentioned how difficult it must be for someone to come to this country and be expected to learn the subject matter in English. For example, three teachers, Mr. Gray, Mr. Holmes, and Ms. Iris, all talked about making a conscious effort to provide as much academic support as possible by translating content into the students' native language. Mr. Gray noted "As far as the teacher's role, we have to try to open the doors even when there is a language barrier. Students [ELLs] should be taught on the English they know. Initially, teachers should present the material in English/Spanish to help ELLs in understanding the content" (Mr. Gray, interview transcription, 10/17/16). These teachers noted that some of what they did was not within the norm of the school's policy or practice; however, this did not prevent them from providing the necessary supports to the ELLs in their class.

One administrator out of the three interviewed talked about supporting ELLs when there was an issue to be resolved. Mr. Albert stated: "In my experience of support, I can be supportive of them. If an ELL comes to me it's either they're having a difficulty in a course or a situation" (Mr. Albert, interview transcription, 9/30/2016). The other two administrators remained focused on their duties as disciplinarians. The literature reports that when ELLs feel emotionally connected and experience positive support from members of the school community, they are more likely to experience academic success (Nelson & Guerra, 2014); however, Ms. Bee and Mr. Castro focused their attention on discipline, which overshadowed the opportunity to create personal relationships with ELLs at the school. A school climate where students feel appreciated and respected for who they are, experience academic success, take pride in their work, and are less likely to drop out (Uzzell et al., 2014).

ELLs at this school spend one period of ESL daily and the rest in general education classrooms with no academic or language support. All five teachers, including the ESL teacher, expressed frustration at the lack of support they received from administration. They also indicated that they felt stressed about their ELLs' performance. Throughout the interviews, the teachers and administrators said that they relied on the few bilingual staff members to provide support for students. These staff members included a counselor, a Spanish teacher, and a non-teaching assistant. These staff members served as interpreters for ELLs, parent conferences and were often called upon to translate instructional materials for teachers. These staff members received no compensation for their services. It is important to point out that the school's largest student population is Hispanic (47%); however, the school has only three individuals on staff (out of 116) that fluently speak both English and Spanish. This includes a non-teaching assistant, Spanish teacher, and a school counselor. The lack of bilingual staff was expressed by Mr. Albert, principal of the school, who stated, "We have a large population of ELLs, but we have minimal teachers working toward catering toward their needs" (Mr. Albert, interview transcription, 9/30/16).

Teaching Content

Aside from providing as much a support as possible, the teachers in this study were concerned with getting through the curriculum, giving benchmarks, and meeting content standards established by the administration. Mr. Holmes explained, "Honestly, it is frustrating not having enough time to prepare" (Mr. Holmes, interview transcription, 10/4/16). Mr. Holmes explained that administration should consider that teachers need more time to prepare lessons to adequately instruct ELLs. Additionally, the demands on

teachers were so great that it left very little time to focus their attention on effectively planning to meet the needs of ELLs. Rios-Aguilar, Gonzalez-Canché, & Moll (2012) stated, "Teachers play a central role in ELL students' education and research has shown that both teachers' perception of their own skills and abilities can influence student outcomes" (p.5).

Teachers in this study, including the ESL teacher, felt ill prepared to deal with the varying degrees of language barriers and academic levels to effectively instruct ELLs. Two of the four general education teachers interviewed voluntarily participated in the district's Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) training, an approach that seeks to integrate language and content learning for ELLs. Ms. Iris, a math teacher and Ms. Far, a language arts teacher did not participate in the SIOP training. Ms. Far, a language arts teacher, stated, "It is difficult for me because I was not formally trained. I feel like if I had formal training it would be easier to try to group students based on language for support" (Ms. Far, interview transcription, 10/14/16). Although she had no formal training, Ms. Far mentioned that she provided beginner ELLs with lower level reading materials to help them gain confidence and build their language skills. She frequently visited with the school's former ESL teacher for guidance and support. Although Ms. Far wanted to support ELLs and went above and beyond to try to seek resources, she still felt she was not able to meet their needs.

Not being able to provide an adequate support system for ELLs in their classrooms was very frustrating to the teacher participants. Mr. Gray, a social studies teacher, shared, "The level of frustration goes up and down because I don't know their academic levels" (Mr. Gray, interview transcription, 10/17/16). This sentiment was

expressed by most of the teachers in this study. They wished that the administrators would provide better indicators to determine the academic levels of the students. Unfortunately, in some cases, students were left to their own devices. As expressed by Mr. Holmes, “The mentality in this school is sink or swim, which is a disgrace for the academic success of students” (Mr. Holmes, interview transcription, 10/4/16). Ms. Bee, a vice principal, shared the same sentiment: “They sink or swim or have to partner up with other students” (Ms. Bee, interview transcription, 10/31/16). There was consensus among teachers and administrators that the sink or swim mentality is detrimental to the academic success of ELLs. In contrast, teachers felt that the school administrators should develop structures to support ELLs in general education classes where they struggle the most. Mr. Holmes was particularly frustrated with the administration's lack of interest in providing support and training to general education teachers.

The remarks made by teachers revealed that there are challenges in dealing with ELLs; however, teachers are expected to find their own way without much support. It is well documented in the literature that educational systems struggle to support the needs of ELLs (Heinke, Coleman, Ferrell, & Kersemeier, 2012); consequently, ELLs do not fare well compared to their English-only peers. Teachers in this study were more than willing to provide ELLs with content in their native language; however, the school’s practice and policy maintained an English-only approach to teaching ELLs. The sink or swim mentality that teachers and administrators expressed is a detriment to the academic success and eventual graduation from high school. As Ms. Ellen stated, “we are setting them up for failure” (Ms. Ellen, interview transcription, 12/2/16). Ms. Ellen was referring

to the inconsistencies in the school's practices and policies that have not addressed the necessary academic supports needed by ELLs.

Disciplinarian

School administrators are in a strong position to affect the educational outcomes of ELLs. Leaders' success in supporting ELLs is predicated on some essential elements: developing district wide policies that emphasize equity, engaging in practices that disrupt school injustices, and increasing staff capacity (Brooks, 2009; Ryan, 2010; Theoharis, 2010). However, administrators that do not lead a school with strong leadership and an emphasis on equity have been shown to adversely affect the educational experiences for ELLs.

For example, Ms. Bee stated: "Being a disciplinarian, sometimes when I have an ELL with an infraction for discipline, we may need another student to translate for us. These are my experiences" (Ms. Bee, interview transcription, 10/31/2016). Ms. Bee described herself as a disciplinarian and within this role her interaction with ELLs was limited only to disciplinary referrals. In general, ELLs could benefit from positive interactions with school staff; however, Mr. Bee's comment reflects how ELLs at this school may have less of an opportunity to engage in positive relationships with administration. Mr. Castro, the only Spanish-speaking administrator, was also only involved with ELLs when they had committed some type of infraction. His conversations centered on what the school was not doing without offering to be part of the solution. He said: "I truly believe that they are not getting a fair share, people know it and the district knows it" (Mr. Castro, interview transcription, 10/14/2016). He went on to say, "The student support services are very minimal here. There is only one Latino administrator in

this school. That speaks volumes with 1400 students with over 47% Latino." Mr. Castro expressed frustration with the school's failure to provide appropriate and consistent support for ELLs. As the only Spanish speaking administrator, Mr. Castro desired more for ELLs; however, from his personal experience he felt that ELLs were not receiving the necessary supports they needed to meet with academic success.

The interactions between ELLs and administrators in this school indicated a lack of sensitivity of which, Cohen et al. (2009) posit is crucial toward the creation of supportive school environments, especially for ELLs. Furthermore, ELLs social and emotional development is enhanced when they feel respected and welcomed by members of the school community. The data collected in this case study indicated the opposite. Although the administrators expressed concerns about the needs of ELLs, and noted ways to improve outcomes for ELLs, none took a direct role in taking further action. One administrator admitted, "I don't think we are equipped" (Ms. Bee, interview transcription, 10/31/16). Ms. Bee added that when meeting with an ELL student she tries to make them feel comfortable. Although Ms. Bee attempts to make ELLs feel more comfortable at the school, her acknowledgement that the school has failed to appropriately support ELLs is a cause for concern.

All three administrators' only contact with ELLs was limited to when they had violated a school rule or regulation. The data indicated that ELLs were not on the administration's radar unless they got into a disciplinary problem. ELLs need to feel secure and understood within a school setting, however administrators' initial contact with an ELL came only after an infraction was committed. Van Roekel (2011) posits that to maximize achievement opportunities for ELLs, educators must understand and

appreciate students' different cultural backgrounds; but in this case, the students' experiences with administrators were framed in negativity.

Participants' Views of the Benefits and Challenges of ELLs

Research question two was designed to explore participant's perceptions of the benefits and challenges of ELLs within the school context. A major theme running across all participants' responses was the rich diversity that ELLs bring to the school. They viewed diversity as an asset for both the school and the students. The main challenges were: communication, resources and support, lack of professional development, and organizational structures to support ELLs.

Benefits

Diversity. All participants agreed that the greatest benefit is the diversity that ELLs bring to the school. Participants were particularly proud of the fact that the school had students from all parts of the world. The cultural and linguistic diversity among the student body provided a place for students to learn from each other. Ms. Far shared her experience with diversity in her class and the lessons that can be learned from students of different backgrounds. Ms. Far shared: "I had a Muslim student in my class and he taught us about their customs and shared that they are peaceful people" (Ms. Far, interview transcription, 10/14/2016). According to Ms. Far, the activity helped students understand Muslim customs and traditions. "It helped to disprove myths that Americans have about Muslims, that is invaluable" (Ms. Far, interview transcription, 10/14/2016). Mr. Gray added: "Our school is the one of the most diverse schools in the state. I try to impress upon my students that we all from different cultures, immigrants from another place. We put flags of the different cultures in the class" (Mr. Gray, interview

transcription, 10/17/2016). Both Ms. Far and Mr. Gray celebrated and appreciated the diversity within their classrooms. They took advantage of the opportunity to create inclusive classrooms where all students, including ELLs felt welcomed. These opportunities exemplify what Gay (2010) and Hyland (2010) referred to as culturally responsive teaching, which is matched with classroom practices that insure academic performance for ELLs.

Mr. Albert, the school's main principal stated, "America being a melting pot. Having people recently from other places bringing their language, traditions and customs, the blending of the best of everything makes us a richer environment" (Mr. Albert, interview transcription, 9/30/2016). Ms. Iris described the school as a pot of soup where there are all kinds of vegetables. "What I love about our school is that most, but not all are very accepting" (Ms. Iris, interview transcription, 10/5/2016). Mr. Castro, an assistant principal, added, "Our kids get to see different kids from different cultural backgrounds. An opportunity to learn about different languages, traditions, holidays, and cuisines that various students bring to our school" (Mr. Castro, interview transcription, 10/14/2016). Ms. Ellen, an assistant principal noted: "It's good to look around the classroom and see that everybody is so different and not the same." Ms. Ellen's sentiment on cultural awareness was based on her strong conviction that people need to be more open-minded when working with individuals from different cultures. She added: "We get caught up in our own cultural or religious background and that it clouds your judgment and our expectations of what people bring to the table" (Ms. Ellen, interview transcription, 12/2/2016). The administrators, like the teacher participants, recognized the value of

diversity and how it brings students together from different backgrounds. Mr. Holmes said it best: "I learn a lot from them" (Ms. Far, interview transcript, 10/14/2016).

At this school, ELLs are recognized as part of the school community on two separate occasions. Participants shared that ELLs cultural heritage is celebrated on multicultural day and during Hispanic heritage month (Fieldnote, 12/2/2016). For example, Mr. Holmes remarked, "We have a special day where students can show their heritage--that is multicultural day. The students themselves want to show their heritage" (Mr. Holmes, interview transcription, 10/4/2016). Besides these two events, at the school level there were no structures in place to recognize the academic achievement of ELLs. Mr. Gray stated: "As far as ELLs I don't know how they are recognized" (Mr. Gray, interview transcription, 10/17/2016). Mr. Deer shared that during his time as the ELL counselor he noticed how difficult it was for ELLs to be recognized for achieving mastery of the English language or for any academic award. Mr. Deer felt that the school should incorporate more opportunities to share ELL's cultural heritage and to recognize their academic accomplishments.

Challenges

In exploring the challenges that the participants perceived relating to ELL students, the major themes that emerged during data analysis were: (a) communication, (b) resources and support, and (c) a lack of professional development.

Communication. Participants agreed that communication was the biggest challenge they faced at this school. The school has one Hispanic administrator, who is fluent in English and Spanish. The other two administrators are monolingual. Most of the teaching staff is monolingual and White. A report by the Council of Great Schools found

that about half of large city school districts either have a shortage of teachers for those learning English or will have on within the next five years (Uro & Barrio, 2013). Hence, since a language barrier exists, participants were most concerned with their inability to communicate with ELLs and their parents in their native language. At this school, teachers rely on other students to translate content for ELLs. In addition, the school's few bilingual staff members are utilized for translation and communication between the school and parents.

Another significant concern for teachers, the counselor and school administrators were the lack of bilingual classroom assistants. The literature states that societal and systemic factors further shape the educational experiences of ELLs; this includes the widespread decrease in the number of bilingual educators (Sullivan, 2011). Teachers in this study expressed how difficult it is for them to communicate with ELLs in their native language. The absence of bilingual assistants that could support them and the ELLs in the classroom was a major concern. For example, Ms. Far, an English teacher, said, "I wish I spoke their language. They miss out on text and interpretation if they don't understand the language" (Ms. Far, interview transcription, 10/14/2016). Mr. Holmes noted, "Honestly it is frustrating not being able to make connections with them (Mr. Holmes, interview transcription, 10/4/2016). Mr. Gray reiterated this thought: "The biggest challenge is that I don't speak Spanish. It would be beneficial to have more bilingual teachers. If the school could offer a Spanish class to teachers to increase our understanding of language. I have a limited idea of language there is only so much I can do in my classroom" (Mr. Gray, interview transcription, 10/17/2016). Mr. Gray's lack of

proficiency in the students' home language and inability to communicate with ELLs compelled him to desire more professional development.

Four out of the five teachers in this study spoke about wanting to learn Spanish and suggested that the school district pay for course work to engage teachers in learning the language that is most spoken at the school (Fieldnote, 12/3/2016). The teachers in this school desired what DelliCarpini and Dailey (2009) concluded in their study of best practices: to compassionately understand ELLs, educators must fully experience language learning themselves.

The level of frustration expressed by Ms. Far, Mr. Holmes, and Mr. Gray was a reality for them and they desired more knowledge with respect to language to properly support ELLs in the classroom (Fieldnote, 10/17/2016). Teachers wanted what Heinke, Coleman, Ferrell, and Kersemeier (2012) suggest for building linguistically responsive schools. This includes negotiating language policy and practice, laying the ideological groundwork for school change, building school structures and support systems, and; fostering collaborative communities of learners.

Resources and support. The discussion among teachers included the lack of appropriate textbooks; that the school did not embed additional academic and language support throughout the day or after school; and the lack of bilingual assistants to support ELLs in the general education classes. These concerns are consistent with what is reported in the literature in which ELLs receive less than favorable educational resources (Nagel, 2016); opportunities to learn, access, and representation in honor or advanced level courses (Callahan et al., 2010) relative to their White peers (Braboy et al., 2007); inadequate teacher training (Gandara & Hopkins, 2010); and curricular isolation (Fraturra

& Cappers, 2007; Honigsfeld & Dove, 2012). These findings from the literature were echoed in what was reported by teachers and the counselor at this school. The data revealed that general education teachers at this school were struggling to teach ELLs because they have not received the adequate training to support ELLs. Mr. Castro, an assistant principal spoke directly about this by saying: "We need to provide them the same education, level the playing field, highly effective teachers" (Mr. Castro, interview transcription, 10/14/2016). Mr. Castro felt compassion for ELLs because he believed that ELLs were not being afforded the same educational opportunities as other students at the school. He wished for more opportunities and knowledgeable teachers for ELLs.

Although teachers made attempts to understand, support, and instruct ELLs, they felt discouraged by the lack of support from administration and at the district level. For example, Ms. Ellen, the school's ESL teacher, expressed dissatisfaction with her inability to instruct ELLs without the necessary instructional materials. She shared, "I'm here making copies of anything I could use. I don't have a textbook, no ESL curriculum, and no online subscriptions that I can use to help the kids [ELLs]. I'm one of the last classrooms without a mounted smartboard" (Ms. Ellen, interview transcription, 12/2/2016). Ms. Far noted "Everything that I have done on my own or with the literacy coach. At the district level, I have not noticed any supports" (Ms. Far, interview transcription, (10/14/2016). In addition, Mr. Deer the schools former ELL counselor noted: "When I was the ELL counselor we were not successful in obtaining resources. The former ESL teacher and I tried to get dictionaries and it was difficult" (Mr. Deer, interview transcription, 10/24/2016).

Unfortunately, the educational needs of ELLs have always required much attention; however, they often receive the least attention in schools (Barrera, 2016). For instance, Mr. Holmes was concerned that ELLs were not being considered within a school-wide plan. He said, "I don't think there is a plan to address the increasing numbers of ELLs within this district. I believe there should be more of a comprehensive plan to a situation that is developing and getting larger" (Mr. Holmes, interview transcription, 10/4/2016). As reported in the literature, ELLs are the fastest growing student population in the nation, their academic success in both content and language is critical for their participation in college, careers, and citizenship in U.S. society and the global community (Llosa et al., 2016). Hence, Mr. Holmes was adamant that the district incorporate a plan that would address the needs of ELLs.

Lack of professional development. In most schools, ELLs are taught by teachers who have little or no understanding of their educational and cultural experiences (Rodriguez, Manner, & Darcy, 2010) and a large majority of teachers lack the necessary pedagogical training in properly instructing ELLs (Bunch, 2013). At this school, teachers reported that they are not provided with the necessary ongoing professional development to address how to best educate ELLs. Like the teachers in this study, the education of ELLs has been of great concern throughout our nation's history. The implications for schools and teachers is great as ELLs are linguistically, culturally, and educationally heterogeneous population (DeCapua & Marshall, 2011), as well as varying in social, and emotional needs (Roy-Campbell, 2013). Although, teachers in this study had good intentions, their lack of knowledge about second language acquisition and effective strategies created an environment that was less than ideal for ELLs. For example, Ms. Iris

had this to say, “We need more training, teachers are frustrated. Every teacher here wants their students to be successful, without training it is impossible to do your job until the district identifies this as an issue we are just going to be in the same place” (Ms. Iris, interview transcription, 10/2/2016). Ms. Far continued, “I feel like it’s difficult for me because I was not formally trained” (Ms. Far, interview transcription, 10/14/2016). Ms. Iris and Ms. Far were especially concerned that without the necessary training and skills they would not be able to move ELLs forward.

It is well documented that a school’s capacity to support ELLs has not kept pace with the ongoing needs of ELLs academic and linguistic needs (Hopkins et al., 2013). The lack of teacher knowledge about second language acquisition and inconsistent school practices in securing the best possible ELL model complicates the matter for both students and teachers (McIntyre et al., 2010; de Oliveira & Athanases, 2007; Stufft & Brogadir, 2011). For example, Ms. Iris shared: “I think you need to have someone that knows how language is learned and could address the needs and concern of the teachers who have [ELLs] in their classrooms” (Ms. Iris, interview transcription, 10/2/2016).

The lack of professional training left teachers feeling incompetent and frustrated. Ms. Iris added, “unfortunately, I know there are a lot of teachers who complain that these kids [ELLs] are in their class and they don’t know what to do with them. It’s not like we have ever had an in-service on how you can help your ELLs to be successful” (Ms. Iris, interview transcription, 10/4/2016). As reported in the literature, many teachers are underprepared to deal with the culturally and linguistic diversity of ELLs (Markos, 2012; Rosa & Orey, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2010). Ms. Iris noted that she and other general education face significant challenges in instructing ELLs.

Mr. Gray expressed, “up until last year, I have not noticed any specific professional development for teachers. For me to be here 12 years teaching history it seems like a long time not to address teacher needs” (Mr. Gray, interview transcription, 10/17/2016). Ms. Iris stated “It has never been addressed at a faculty meeting, or in a department meeting. Unless I have forgotten, I don’t recall any faculty or department meeting that have addressed ELLs” (Ms. Iris, interview transcription, 10/5/2016). Both Mr. Gray and Ms. Iris expressed disappointment with the school’s failure to provide them with the appropriate professional development. Consequently, the unresponsive climate at this school creates academic barriers and obstacles to authentic learning and academic success, thus limiting opportunities for ELLs (Webb & Barrera, 2017).

“A commitment to social justice begins with the recognition that an injustice has occurred and that we will address that injustice through the vision we create and the actions we take to ensure the success of all students” (Hirsch, 2010, p. 72). The data revealed that participants felt that the lack of resources and support for ELLs nonexistent therefore ELLs were not being provided with a fair and equitable educational opportunity. On this topic Ms. Far, described her ideal school for ELLs, “If we can bring the Montessori aspect. Small classes where they can learn English, slowly putting them in inclusion” (Ms. Far, Interview transcription, 10/14/16). Mr. Castro shared his thoughts about how he perceived ELLs experiences at this school. Mr. Castro shared the following:

> Difficult. Think about you going to another country and people not willing to help you. Those are major challenges, or you not being provided with a thorough and efficient education that you should be getting compared to students that speak

> English. That's my opinion. I have seen that last year in this school not being accepted by English speaking students. From what I observed kids generally get along with each other but there is a polarization when you see a group of Latino students sitting on one table and not assimilating with other students this tells you that they don't feel comfortable yet, that they have not been accepted (Mr. Castro, interview transcription, 10/14/2016).

Furthermore, Mr. Holmes expressed how the district is not paying enough attention to the issues surrounding the ELLs at the school. He noted, "I just believe this particular district does not address the issues and I believe we need training now. They need to make sure they [the school] has a plan in place to welcome, monitor [ELLs'] performance like other students that don't have a language barrier" (Mr. Holmes, interview transcription, 10/4/2016). Mr. Albert, the school's main principal depicted a school culture where only certain teachers would be willing to work with ELLs. He communicated: "I have a few not many that champion the rights and the needs of ELLs. Overall, the environment is neutral. A minority of people do actively seek to engage the ESL population and seeking resources and work toward advancing their education" (Mr. Albert, interview transcription, 9/30/2016). Both Mr. Holmes and Mr. Albert had an awareness of what is transpiring at the school that seems inequitable toward ELLs. Mr.

Holmes expressed how ELLs need to receive the same treatment as their English-speaking peers and how important training is for teachers. On the other hand, Mr. Albert, the school's principal, described a neutral environment that offered very little support from most of his staff.

Organizational Structures for ELLs

The qualitative data revealed that the teachers and the counselor in this study were dissatisfied with how ELLs are positioned in the school compared to their native-English speaking peers. The lack of a unified vision and direction from administrators in advancing opportunities for ELLs was viewed as an obstacle to the academic achievement of ELLs at this school. Lezotte and Snyder (2011) posit that the outcomes for ELLs are more positive in school settings where all stakeholders work together to develop a shared school vision. In addition, ELLs fare better academically in schools where educators model and value the strengths of ELLs families (Cohen et al., 2009; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011). However, the teachers and the counselor in this study expressed concern that without a shared vision, ELLs will continue to lag behind their monolingual English-speaking peers. For example, Mr. Holmes stated,

> I don't think there is enough in the way of support. I think it is based on the structure and the planning of the school district as a whole. It doesn't seem to be an important part of the culture of the school, for many years, no matter whether it is Latino, Asian, or African American students from different backgrounds are expected to integrate on their own without much support (Mr. Holmes, interview transcription, 10/4/2016).

Mr. Holmes and Ms. Iris had similar concerns regarding the lack of support that is embedded into the school culture and that addressing the needs of ELLs does not seem to be a priority. Ms. Iris noted "we [school] tend to lean more on the majority" (Mr. Iris, interview transcription, 10/5/2016). Another teacher, Ms. Far, spoke about the need for the school to reduce class size, increasing resources and involving parents in the process

(Ms. Far, interview transcription, 10/14/16). Parent involvement has been regarded as an important element for the academic success of ELLs (Heineke et al., 2012). Mr. Castro noted that it is "very important to have parental involvement, as many of these parents do not speak English" (Mr. Castro, interview transcription, 10/14/2016). Mr. Holmes also agreed by saying: "Involve parents and educating them to what is required is important" (Mr. Holmes, interview transcription, 10/4/2016). From my observation, ELL parents' involvement in the school is limited to back to school nights and extracurricular activities (Fieldnotes, 10/6/2016).

Mr. Deer, a former ELL counselor, shared that his biggest challenge was getting ELLs the same recognitions [academic awards] that all students receive in the building (Mr. Deer, interview transcription, 10/24/16). He explained that he had a difficult time getting administration to understand ELLs' experiences and that they deserve to be recognized. He also shared that it was frustrating when trying to place an ELL in the best position possible when creating a class schedule. He further noted that he specifically picked teachers that would support ELLs. Recognizing the efforts and achievement of ELLs is essential for building capacity among ELLs without it ELLs feel disconnected from the school (Cohen et al., 2009) and are more likely to drop out of school (Bedolla, 2012).

Teachers in this study reported that the lack of time, resources, and support at the school or district level challenged them in educating ELLs. They were also concerned with how ELLs were neglected by administration. This is a pattern that is consistent among other schools where the education of ELLs is not a priority. Even though research and policy have provided educators a better understanding of what is needed, schools

continue to fall short in providing a fair and equitable education for ELLs (Center on Educational Policy, 2010). In addition, the responses of the teachers and the counselor was also consistent with what Sullivan (2011) described as systemic factors that shape the educational experiences; these factors include the availability of language supports, and how educational policies have done little to promote the necessary supports needed by ELLs in schools (Honigsfeld, 2010).

The literature on effective schools emphasizes the importance on building school cultures that utilize language and linguistic diversity as an avenue to improve social, emotional, and academic needs of a diverse population (Gay, 2010). However, the participants in this study described a scenario in which ELLs are underserved. For example, one interview question asked participants to think about what it is like to be an ELL at this school. All nine participants described ELLs experiences as possibly frustrating, scary, strange or isolating (Fieldnote, 12/2/2016). Ms. Bee, an assistant principal, connected the students' feelings with how educators should respond: "I feel it is difficult and we have to be tolerant and patient" (Ms. Bee, interview transcription, 10/31/2016). Ms. Far, a language arts teacher, described the school as a tunnel where there is a lot of noise and ELLs have a difficult time making sense of things. She noted, "It would be hard to think in a classroom where there was all that noise and static" (Ms. Far, interview transcription, 10/14/2016). Ms. Far felt great empathy for ELLs because she understood how difficult it must be for ELLs to acclimate to the expectations in a high school where not much support was being provided. Another teacher could not even imagine being an ELL. She shared, "I can't imagine coming to a country and not

understanding or not being able to read signs. How do you? I don't know how you do that" (Ms. Iris, interview transcript, 10/5/2016).

It is documented in the literature that a positive school climate fosters the development and learning necessary for a productive, contributive, and satisfying life in a democratic society. This climate includes norms, values, and expectations that support feeling socially, emotionally, and physically safe (Cohen et al., 2009; Sailes, 2008). On this topic Ms. Ellen added:

> I think the school should play more of a role in the social/emotional development of ELLs then they do right now. In general, we have gotten away from the social development and more focused on testing. There is a lack of sensitivity for ELLs. We don't worry as much anymore about how these kids [ELLs] feel when we just dump them in the cafeteria for lunch with no one to talk to. We have someone following them around for one day and that's it and then you are thrown into the wolves (Ms. Ellen, interview transcript, 12/2/2016).

Ms. Ellen expressed frustration that the school had not developed a long-term plan to support ELLs when they first enter the school. She described the students as being "thrown into the wolves," which is analogous to a dangerous situation newly arrived ELLs (Ms. Ellen, Fieldnote, 12/2/2016). Furthermore, Mr. Albert's comments did not provide a clear road map on how the school would support ELLs and their families. Similarly, Mr. Albert, the principal of the school said,

> I should make them a priority I guess. They don't come to me even if I invite them [ELL parents]. I'm very open to talking to people but rarely do these parents call me or come in even if I call someone to come in. If it's not good enough for

my child, then it's not good enough for them. We must remove the barriers" (Mr. Albert, interview transcription, 9/30/16).

Based on his own personal feelings, Mr. Albert realized that it is important to remove the barriers that exist by making ELLs a priority. However, he felt that ELL parents were unresponsive and was not clear as to how to invite ELL parents into the school. On the contrary, teachers, the counselor, and two other administrators in this study felt that the school culture needed to embrace and establish a more inclusive environment for ELLs and their parents (Fieldnote, 12/2/2016).

There was widespread agreement among participants that the school should play a significant role in the social and emotional development of ELLs as it could open doors for the in the future. Mr. Albert, the principal, went on to say:

> If the primary language is not English this may be the only opportunity [for students] practice without fear. Opportunity to build confidence in using language to network and make connections with the community. In the social development aspect having a safe environment meets new friends and communicate with people who may not be of your family's native origin. Opportunity to expand your horizon. To be exposed to different people and different cultures and I guess become Americanized in a sense (Mr. Albert, interview transcription, 9/30/2016).

According to Brown-Jeff (2011) and Bennett (2013) it is important to acknowledge the home culture of ELL students and to strategically integrate these cultural experiences, values, and understandings into the teaching and environment. However, Mr. Albert's interpretation of what constituted support for ELLs

social/emotional development meant that ELLs needed to assimilate to the customs and traditions associated with the U.S.

Mr. Castro, assistant principal stated: "I believe those students [ELLs] need exposure in and exposure out. It's my feeling that social and emotional learning is needed with [ELLs]. The unfortunate thing is that we are focused a lot on testing and the kids lose out because there isn't enough individualization and tailoring of their education" (Mr. Castro, interview transcription, 10/14/2016). ELLs require more time from teachers, however as reported in the literature, teachers spend so much time on testing and following scripted curriculum that they have little time to form valuable relationships with students (Sleeter, 2012). Mr. Castro perceived that ELLs needed more opportunities to engage in school activities that promote their well-being. Mr. Castro was concerned with the school's lack of resources and desired to see ELLs as part of the school in a more meaningful way.

Ms. Far agreed that the school should play a bigger role in developing ELLs' academic and social development. "I don't think they are given enough opportunities to have a strong understanding of the academic and social aspect of speaking English with peers" (Ms. Far, interview transcription, 10/14/2016). Ms. Far was concerned that ELLs were not being afforded opportunities to advance their academic/social development within the school's organizational structure. Additionally, she noted that other than the school counselor no one seemed to be advocating for ELLs. Mr. Gray stated, "the school should play a key role in the academic/social development of ELLs" (Mr. Gray, interview transcription, 10/17/2016). The former ELL counselor Mr. Deer continued: "I think we need to be socially inclusive of everyone and we want everyone to feel that they are in a

caring and safe environment. I think that is the school's role" (Mr. Deer, interview transcription, 10/21/2016). Ms. Far, Mr. Gray, and Mr. Deer shared a strong conviction that ELLs needed more academic support and the school has the responsibility to provide them with opportunities to expand their horizons.

Conclusion

According to Theoharis and O'Toole (2011) creating inclusive practices for ELLs involves valuing students learning, positioning them and their families, languages, and culture as integral aspects of the school community. This includes members of the school community embracing the challenge to advancing the needs of ELLs through advocacy (Anderson,2009). In research question one, teacher participants (n = 5) and the counselor (n = 1) collectively agreed that ELLs were not positioned fairly and that their needs were being not being addressed accordingly. Additionally, two teachers out of five felt that ELL parents were left out of meaningful conversations and information regarding their child's education. Furthermore, the counselor and the ESL teacher extended themselves beyond their duties to advocate on behalf of the ELLs at this school. Additionally, two teachers became advocates by approaching administration and supervisors for additional resources for ELLs. The remaining teachers (n = 2) and administration (n = 3) regarded their role with ELLs at specific to teaching or discipline. Berg, Petron, and Greybeck (2012) posit that the education of ELLs is everyone's responsibility and when members of the school community work together to create inclusive environments ELLs fair better.

Furthermore, according to Stepanek, Raphael, Autio, Deussen, and Thompson (2010) school administrators are in a strong position to affect positive change on behalf of ELLs through advocacy and by challenging the status quo. The results of research

question one revealed that teacher participants' (n = 5) and the counselor (n = 1) shared a strong conviction that administration were less than willing to support teachers and that the climate failed to include norms, values, and expectations that would create more positive experiences for ELLs. According to Gay (2010) ELLs school achievement is enhanced when protocols and programs of teaching are synchronized with the mental schema, learning styles, work habits, and background of diverse students. Therefore, when the school fails to recognize ELLs as important, they feel disconnected and are less likely to engage in learning.

Moreover, despite the increasing number of ELLs in U.S. public schools, many teachers are unprepared to deal with the varied educational needs of ELLs (Markos, 2012; Rosa, 2015; & Darling-Hammond, 2010). The results of research question two generated findings which, illustrated that teacher participants (n = 5) were concerned with the lack of pedagogical knowledge of second language acquisition and ongoing professional development that could improve instructional techniques that would support ELLs in general education classrooms. Additionally, the results indicated a lack of cohesiveness among school personnel in collaborating to address the academic, social/emotional needs of ELLs. The teachers and the counselor talked about how they worked in isolation to resolve issues related to ELLs advancement in school. They also expressed disappointed with administrator's minimal efforts in securing the tools and support teachers needed to do an effective job in instructing ELLs. The literature explicitly states and supports that school staff, teachers, counselors, and administrators play a significant role in creating inclusive environments where ELLs feel safe, respected, and afforded the opportunities to excel academically (Cohen et al., 2009; Gay,

2010; Sailes, 2008). Moreover, ELLs that have teachers that are well prepared with the necessary knowledge and skills to support them have positive outcomes (Calderón& Minaya-Rowe, 2010).

Chapter 5

Discussion and Implications

As identified in the literature review, the demographics of the U.S. classrooms are becoming more diverse. Between the fall of 2001 and projections for fall of 2021, the number of White students enrolled in U.S. public schools is projected to decrease, whereas the number of Hispanic students is expected to increase from 7.9 million to 14.2 million in 2021 (The Condition of Education, 2013). About an estimated 60% of Hispanic students are ELLs (NCES, 2012). As the number of ELLs continues to increase across U.S. schools, it is critical to raise the consciousness of teachers, administrators, and counselors to reflect on their role in developing inclusive environments practices for ELLs. This is especially critical as the literature on effective schools emphasizes the need for schools to create more socially just schools that are equipped with the necessary supports and advocacy for ELLs (Gay, 2010; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011).

The objective of this phenomenological study was to explore how teachers, administrators, and counselors define their role in working with ELLs. The aim was to continue the conversation that exists in the literature about the need to create inclusive schools and practices that place the needs of ELLs first. The knowledge gained from hearing the collective responses of teachers, administrators, and counselor that work directly with ELLs daily may benefit other schools that may be struggling to help ELLs meet their academic potential. These findings can also inform practice, policy, and future research in creating inclusive schools for ELLs. The education of ELLs has been of great concern in our nation's history. It is well documented in the literature that educational

systems struggle to meet the needs of culturally diverse students which includes ELLs (Collins, 2014; Sailes, 2008; Heineke et al., 2012).

This study was guided by two research questions:

1. How do teachers, administrators, and counselors describe their roles in working with ELLs?
2. How do teachers, administrators, and counselors describe the benefits and challenges of ELLs in the school?

By employing Moustakas (1994) five steps, the essence of the teachers, administrators, and counselors' lived experiences relative to their role in working with ELLs was captured. The process involved epoche, phenomenological reduction, and synthesizing the structural and textural descriptions, to arrive at the essence of the phenomena. After the data was transcribed, organized, coded, and analyzed, significant statements were discussed, and themes identified. In chapter four the themes were reported in detail along with a narrative of the lived experiences of the nine participants.

In this chapter, a brief summary of the findings is presented followed by a discussion of the findings in relation to the theoretical framework and relevant literature. Moreover, in this chapter, I discuss the implications of the study and recommendations for future research.

An analysis of the data revealed five themes that directly related to administrators', teachers', and counselors' perceived roles in working with ELLs: (a) advocate, (b) disposition of empathy and support, (c) teaching content, (d) disciplinarian, and (e) organizational structure. Additionally, it was discovered that diversity in the student body was regarded as important to the school. While, challenges in

communication, lack of professional development and training, limited resources, and support structures were seen as obstacles that prevented participants from successfully working ELLs.

Research Question 1

In terms of research question one, which explored how administrators, teachers, and counselor view their role in working with ELLs, the analysis suggested that the participants related to ELLs from their respective role at the school. For example, the teachers focused their time and efforts on instruction and making content comprehensible to ELLs. On the other hand, the administrators were solely involved with ELLs through discipline. The counselor was able to advocate and on placing ELLs with the appropriate teachers through scheduling. Examples of advocacy included requesting bilingual textbooks and dictionaries, as well a request by the ESL teacher to develop a curriculum that would assist ELLs in learning English like their monolingual peers.

While there are no established guidelines or rules for the role administrators, teachers, and counselors should embark on with ELLs, the literature on effective schools provides a foundation for understanding the crucial need for advocacy among school personnel. While most of the participants expressed a genuine desire in meeting the needs of ELLs there were minimal examples of continued advocacy on behalf of ELLs. For example, three of the five teachers and the counselor at some point attempted to secure instructional materials directly through supervisors and/or administrators without much success. After being denied, participants seemed less likely to challenge the status quo in making certain that they had the necessary tools and resources to help ELLs. Instead, teachers and counselor worked in isolation. The notion of working in collaboration

among teachers, counselor, and administrators appears to contradict what Heineke et al. (2012) noted: when teachers, administrators, counselors, and community members work together they can work to improve the social, linguistic, and academic achievement of ELLs. Moreover, the findings seemed to echo what Honigsfeld and Dove (2012) concluded in their study, which may explain the reason why the teachers and the counselor were less likely to engage in advocacy on behalf of ELLs. They concluded that teachers often lack the understanding of ELLs' sociocultural, linguistic, academic, and social needs to properly advocate on behalf of ELLs. Moreover, Honigsfeld and Dove's study concluded that teachers often work in isolation without much support, which precludes them from being effective teachers for ELLs.

Furthermore, there exists a body of evidence that teacher education programs should place more emphasis on issues related to equity and social justice in order to develop teacher candidates that become advocates and work to advance the needs of ELLs (Calderón & Minaya- Rowe, 2010; Medina et al., 2015). While the teachers and the counselor in this study had much empathy and were supportive in their own way toward ELLs, they were less informed on how to advocate for what they considered important for ELLs to address the academic, social, and emotional well-being of ELLs at this school.

The teachers and the counselor perceived that the administration was disengaged with the needs of ELLs and disinterested in obtaining appropriate materials, such as bilingual textbooks, and in securing bilingual assistants in general education classes. Regrettably, ELLs also experience higher levels of poverty and are more likely to attend segregated, lower resourced, and unsafe schools, compared to their non-ELL counterparts

(Soto, 2011). In an examination of school characteristics and educational outcomes revealed pervasive disparities for ELLs in resources (Nagel, 2016), opportunities to learn, access, and representation in honors or advanced placement classes (Callahan, Wilkinson, & Muller, 2010), relative to their White peers (Braboy et al., 2007).

Although teachers at this high school received no direct support or guidance, they provided support in teaching content to ELLs by using other students to translate instructional material when possible to make content more comprehensible. Teachers voiced frustration in their inability to accommodate ELLs without knowing their ELLs' academic levels and educational backgrounds. The teachers and the counselor agreed that ELLs shortcomings in English hindered them from accessing the content and therefore are not able to compete academically with their monolingual English-speaking students. This is a legitimate concern expressed by the participants and consistent with de Schonewise Almanza and Klingner (2012), who report that many ELLs have little to no knowledge of the English language when they arrive, and some have had several different levels of schooling. Additionally, as reported by teachers and confirmed through the literature, many ELLs have a difficult time negotiating classroom expectations, perform poorly on state tests, and often drop out before receiving a high school diploma (García Bedolla, 2012). The teachers and counselor were most concerned with the lack of urgency on the part of administrators in the district in securing an appropriate ELL program model and support services for ELLs. In spite of this, teachers and the counselor relied on the ESL teacher when possible for academic support for ELLs.

Moreover, at this school ELLs receive one period of ESL the rest of the day they are in general education classes. According to the teachers and the counselor, ELLs are

expected to acquire the language by being immersed in an all English curriculum without language support. The teachers expressed concern with their lack of knowledge regarding language development and agreed that ELLs needed more attention and academic support. The teachers found it difficult to teach the content to ELLs without having the necessary knowledge of how ELLs acquire language. It is well noted in the literature that ELLs need to comprehend the content without minimal background knowledge or preparation, but also have fewer years to master the English language (Calderón et al., 2011). This analysis supports findings that suggest that a school's capacity to support ELLs has not kept pace with the ongoing needs of ELLs academic and linguistic needs (Hopkins et al., 2013) and the most difficult challenges facing U.S. public schools (Cavanaugh, 2009).

The teachers in this study noted that they are expected to get through a scripted curriculum without being provided ample time to prepare meaningful instructional lesson for their ELLs. In addition, the analysis revealed that administrators did not take opportunities to forge meaningful relationships with ELLs. Their only encounters with ELLs came following a disciplinary referral. All three administrators regarded ELLs as important and valuable to the school environment; however, they spent much of their time attending to discipline and less on understanding ELLs experiences. There is evidence in the literature that recognizes the importance of recognizing the intersecting elements that influence family, community, and societal contexts that influence the lived experiences of ELLs to create optimal learning opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds (Cohen et al.,2009; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011). Without such attention to these elements, optimizing the development and learning of ELLs cannot be fully

understood, and institutionally embedded interventions to foster learning will fall critically short of their learning and equity goals (Jimenez-Castellanos & García, 2017).

Throughout the interviews, it became apparent that administrators had an awareness of some of the school's shortcomings, such as, lack of resources, academic support, and opportunities offered to ELLs to feel connected to their peers and the wider school community. They acknowledged that more attention needs to be devoted toward the academic, social, and emotional well-being of ELLs. One administrator voiced his concern that ELLs were not given a fair shot with positive exposure to become lifelong learners beyond high school. This apparent disconnect from administrators is detrimental to the success of ELLs. According to Stepanek et al. (2010), school administrators are in the best position to effect positive change on behalf of ELLs through advocacy and by challenging the status quo. The power that administrators possess to change a school culture is illustrated by Theoharis's (2010) qualitative study in which six principals embarked on creating a more just and equitable school experience for ELLs. They sought to disrupt four kinds of social injustices: 1) school structure that marginalized, segregated, and impeded achievement, such as pull-out program; 2) deprofessionalized teaching- focused on staff development; 3) school climate that needs to be more welcoming to marginalized families and communities; 4) disparate student achievement levels. Results of this study and others (Ryan, 2010; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011) concluded that social justice is a must and can be achieved; that inclusive schooling is necessary and enriching component to enacting justice; that increasing staff capacity is essential to carry out a comprehensive agenda focused on equity, and that creating a climate that deeply values racial, cultural, and economic diversity is key to enacting

social justice in schools. Contrary to this, the data analysis showed that during a typical school day administrators rarely engaged with ELLs. In many cases, their only contact with an ELL was for disciplinary reasons. At this school, administrators maintained to the role of disciplinarian, maintaining order, and assuring that teachers follow the curriculum.

The literature suggests that school administrators that make a conscious effort to promote the needs of ELLs by supporting teachers, creating inclusive environments and engaging families through community partnerships have seen greater academic gains. In addition, ELLs' social/emotional development is enhanced by the feeling of respect received by those in the school community (Stepanek et al., 2010).

Research Question 2

In response to research question two, the analysis suggested that there has been a major shift in the number of ELLs at the school. According to participants, the school has more than doubled in the number of ELLs and continues to grow. The teachers and the counselor feared that without a comprehensive plan from the district or the school to address the needs of such a diverse group of learners, ELLs will be excluded from receiving a fair and equitable education. This finding is consistent with the literature which reports that the demographics of US schools are becoming more culturally and linguistically diverse (Hyland, 2010; Madlangobe & Gordon, 2012; & Ates et al., 2015). In addition, it is well documented that teachers and schools struggle to support the needs of culturally diverse students (Collins, 2014; Sailes, 2008), in particular, ELLs (Heineke et al., 2012).

In speaking about the diversity in the student population, the teachers, the counselor, and the administrators agreed that ELLs are a great addition to the school.

They spoke highly of the linguistic and cultural diversity that ELLs bring to the school. According to researchers, it is critical for schools to should celebrate diversity and more importantly to incorporate such diversity when developing curriculum and instruction (García Bedolla, 2012; de Schonewise Almanza & Klingner, 2012; Nieto, 2000; & Goldenberg, 2008). However, the data revealed that ELLs followed a monolingual curriculum that did not include the students' personal background. Also, when participants shared about how diversity is celebrated and incorporated into the daily activities of the school, participants shared that ELLs experienced a connection to the school and their peers during the school's annual multicultural event held in March and during the Hispanic heritage assembly held in October. According to participants, ELLs are not fully integrated into the school and usually stay together without engaging in conversations with their monolingual English-speaking peers. Also, the teachers and the counselor, and one administrator noted that ELLs accomplishments were not recognized by the school; therefore, ELLs feel isolated and disconnected from the school. They mutually agreed that school practices are not inclusive of ELLs' presence in the school and their individual efforts are not being recognized. Such negative experiences have shown to diminish ELLs chances of being more engaged and academically successful (Gay, 2010; DelliCarpini & Dailey, 2009). Overall, the teachers, administrators, and the counselor noted that most students get along with ELLs in the school. Some teachers reported that on occasions some students are not as sensitive to the needs of ELLs. In general, the teachers were most concerned that ELLs may not feel welcomed or comfortable in the school.

It is important to point out that while the school can increase their efforts in creating a more inclusive environment, a few of the teachers in this study drew on their students' background during instruction. These efforts seem to back up the various assertions in the literature that the importance of connecting on a personal level and using culture when planning classroom instruction is critical to ELLs' academic success. Gay (2010) and Calderón, Minaya-Rowe (2010) among others emphasize how important it is for teachers to develop the necessary skills and strategies for connecting with students who differ from their own backgrounds. By building such meaningful learning environments through the recognition of students' background and identities in instruction, ELLs have greater academic gains in language development (Echevarria & Vogt, 2010). This is further emphasized by Van Roekel (2011) in which he affirms that in order to maximize the achievement opportunities for ELLs, educators must understand and appreciate students' cultural backgrounds.

Challenges in Educating ELLs

In response to question two, the analysis suggested that there are some serious challenges being faced by the teachers, counselor, and administrators at this school. The challenges that teachers and counselor spoke of were less than optimal support structures for ELLs, lack of in-service and professional development, minimal resources, and communication as a major problem in communicating with students and their families. Additionally, all participants agreed that not having bilingual staff or aides in general education classes to assist ELLs was a major obstacle. This finding corroborates what researchers and scholars have noted about the challenges that many schools face in working with ELLs. The fact that much of the staff is monolingual and White places

ELLs at a disadvantage and unable to compete with their English-speaking peers. According to a report by the Council of Great Schools about half of the large city school districts have a shortage of teachers for those learning English or will have one within the next five years (Uro & Barrio, 2013). The literature states that societal and systemic factors like those described by participants further shape the educational experiences of ELLs, this includes the widespread decrease in the number of bilingual educators (Sullivan, 2011). According to experts in the field, this trend severely affects the outcomes of culturally diverse students, especially ELLs who need more academic, social, and emotional support. At least three out of the four teachers and the counselor wish they spoke Spanish in order to facilitate ELLs learning. Like many general education teachers of ELLs in U.S. schools, the teachers at Stargate High School faced a real challenge in educating ELLs. The analysis revealed that teachers were extremely frustrated and acknowledged that they had received less than adequate training in supporting ELLs through instruction. With more than twenty years combined of teaching experience, participants could not recall a time when they had professional development or an in-service to teach them about ELLs. For general education teachers, past research has consistently shown that ELLs are taught by teachers with little or no understanding of their educational and cultural experiences (Rodriguez et al., 2010). Likewise, Hyland (2010) reported that a large majority of teachers lack the necessary pedagogical knowledge or training in properly instructing ELLs.

Implications

School structures. The findings suggest that contextual factors such as limited resources, poor communication among school staff about ELLs, and relationships (lack of collaboration) create complex dynamics that impede teachers for creating optimal learning environments for ELLs. According to participants, the policies and practices that guide the school are at best limited and weak. The teachers and the counselor agreed that at the school and district level there had been no conversation about ELLs and how to address their needs. Therefore, the creation of a task force to specifically address ELLs at this school would benefit teachers in voicing their concerns. It would also allow teachers the opportunity to collaborate with school personnel in creating a curriculum, accessing resources, and developing a shared vision for the success of ELLs at this school.

The literature reports that in most U.S. schools ELLs are at a disadvantage and tend to perform poorly academically compared to their English-speaking peers. The lack of support and guidance that participants spoke of indicates that issues of equity and access for ELLs are compromised at this school. The literature and research studies reinforce the need to create inclusive environments where all students, especially, ELLs, could thrive. For example, Theoharis's (2010) found that social justice in schools is necessary to create more just and equitable schools. Theoharis's study regards principals as the catalyst for change in schools. In his study six principals' sought to disrupt injustices. Theoharis concluded that social justice is a must and can be achieved; that inclusive schooling is necessary and enriching component to enacting justice; that increasing staff efficacy is essential to carry out a comprehensive agenda focused on equity; and that creating a climate that deeply values racial, cultural, and economic

diversity is a key to enacting justice in schools. The greatest outcome is that such efforts resulted in higher academic achievement for marginalized students. Participants in this study mutually agreed that ELLs should not be ignored and hoped that school administrators could provide them with the necessary tools to level the playing field for ELLs. As such, this school should work to promote a school-wide culture that supports and embraces inclusive practices. Such an approach will help to create an environment where all students, including ELLs feel connected, safe, and welcomed.

The teachers in this study continually expressed how difficult it was for them to teach ELLs without the necessary support and instructional tools from administration and supervisors. Integration of ELLs into general education classrooms has its benefits, however, teachers need support and training in order to address the needs of ELLs. Therefore, it is important for the administration to provide teachers with the necessary in-service and professional development regarding best practices for ELLs. From their perspective, ELLs and their families are not integrated accordingly to support their academic, social, and emotional well-being. For example, one of the teachers stated: "We are setting them up for failure" (Ms. Ellen, interview transcript, 2016). What was more alarming was some administrators acknowledged that the school operated on a "sink or swim mentality". More specifically, that ELLs needed to learn the language and navigate through the school system on their own. From the teachers and counselor's perspective, the lack of unified vision and direction from administrators in advancing opportunities for ELLs was seen as a major obstacle to the academic success of ELLs and eventual graduation from high school. Therefore, adopting school practices that benefit all students, especially for ELLs is and should be a priority (Echevarria & Graves, 2007;

Rios-Aguilar 2010; Gay, 2010; Rios-Aguilar et al., 2012). Therefore, the school should work to have a designated space for ELLs to receive academic support through additional tutoring and language support. Also, the school should consider developing a mentoring program for newly arrived ELLs to help them acquire the necessary skills to navigate successfully throughout their high school career and beyond. Additionally, these opportunities will allow ELLs to feel safe and welcomed in an environment that for many are unfamiliar to many of them.

Teacher participants expressed how difficult it is to teach in a school where ELLs do not appear to be a priority and where their repeated requests for support and resources seemed to be ignored. This supports what the literature suggests; even though research and policy have provided educators a better understanding of what is needed, schools continue to fall short in providing a fair and equitable education for ELLs (Center on Educational Policy, 2010; Honigsfeld, 2010). Likewise, the lack of language support and minimal support services directly supports Sullivan's (2011) description of the systemic factors that close off ELLs from experiencing success and feeling more connected to their school. According to researchers and scholars, the education of ELLs has always required much attention, however they often receive the least attention in schools (Barren, 2016).

A positive school climate has been regarded as the most important element that fosters the development for productive, contributive, and satisfying life in a democratic society. This climate includes norms, values, and expectations that support social, emotional, and physical safety (Cohen et al., 2009; Sailes, 2008). The quality of instruction is what matters in educating ELLs (Calderón et al., 2011). Based on their review of the literature on school reform and effective practices, Calderón, Slavin, and

Sailes concluded that effective programs include four structural elements that benefit ELLs: 1) constant collection and use data on learning, teaching, attendance, and behavior, (2) strong focus on professional development for all staff members, including administrators, 3) standards of behavior and effective strategies for classroom and school management, (4) leadership focused on building a "high reliability organization" that shares information widely, monitors quality of teaching and learning carefully, and holds all staff accountable for progress toward established goals in addition to, setting high expectations for all students (Stufft & Brogadir, 2011). The above recommendations by Calderón, Slavin, and Sailes could serve administrators at this school by providing them with concrete evidence based structural elements that would give ELLs are a more positive educational experience.

Moreover, developing connections with students' families and cultures through culturally relevant teaching methods and curriculum is essential to the academic success of ELLs. For example, Araujo (2009) identified and described a set of practices and strategies for working and collaborating with diverse families. These include: (a) incorporating funds of knowledge, (b) practicing culturally relevant teaching, (c) fostering effective communication, and (d) extending and accepting assistance. In order to alleviate the concern about the lack of parent involvement, this school should make every effort to increase ELL parent participation in school-wide events. This includes 1) providing translators for parent conferences and school events; 2) making sure that all communication, letters, etc. are sent home in various languages; 3) practicing culturally responsive teaching. Such efforts will ensure that ELLs and their families feel

appreciated and valued by the school. Moreover, ELLs will have a better chance for academic success.

Professional Development

The literature makes a powerful statement about the need for ongoing professional development for teachers of ELLs, in particular, general education teachers is of critical importance (Bunch, 2013; García et al., 2010). The analysis supports the fact that despite the increasing number of ELLs across U.S. public schools, many teachers are underprepared to deal with the varied challenges presented by ELLs and the complex issues concerning the linguistic and culturally relevant education (Markos, 2012; Rosa, 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2010) of these students. Throughout the interviews, the teachers expressed a desire to learn instructional strategies to help ELLs but felt helpless without the proper training. Although teachers had knowledge of their content and pedagogy to teach their subject matter, their sense of self-efficacy was low when teaching ELLs. Some of the teachers described a scenario in which they had not received any in-service or professional development related to ELLs. One teacher with twelve plus years of experience stated that he had never had training until recently when he volunteered for a SIOP training. Others noted that as far they could remember ELLs were never addressed at faculty or department meetings. This expands on the fact that such neglect creates academic barriers and obstacles to authentic learning and academic success, thus limiting opportunities for ELLs (Calderón et al., 2011). This lack of training by general education teachers is further supported by Samson and Collins's (2012) notion that while general education teachers need to understand and know their

content and pedagogy to teach grade-level standards, they will also need specific skills to help ELLs access the curriculum.

In order to address the lack of professional development that teachers currently receive, administrators should implement professional development and in-service days throughout the school year. Such professional development should focus on the practical strategies for teachers to incorporate appropriate instructions and assessments in the general education classes to meet the needs of ELLs. Also, administrators and department supervisors could ensure that teachers are equipped with the necessary resources in the classroom to reflect the linguistic and cultural diversity in the school. Moreover, administrators should encourage collaboration among general education teachers and ESL specialists. This partnership will assist teachers in preparing lesson plans and in building their instructional and assessment strategies in supporting ELLs as they work to understand the content.

Furthermore, participant narratives uncovered that the lack of professional development, cultural understanding, and knowledge of language acquisition, and inability to communicate with ELLs made for a very challenging and stressful environment. However, they pushed forward by offering academic support after school, translating documents when possible, and used other native speaking students to help with content. In order to address the teacher's inability to communicate with ELLs, the school should hire bilingual assistants that could serve as assistants to support teachers and ELLs in general education classrooms. This finding is cause for concern as scholars and researchers point out that teachers that are well prepared to face the challenges of meeting the needs of ELLs fare better; for the most part these students' make great

academic gains (Apple, 2011; Knutsen-Miller et al., 2009; Reeves, 2009). In addition, scholars (McIntyre et al., 2010; de Oliveira & Athanases, 2007; Stufft & Brogadir, 2011) have found that the lack of teacher knowledge about second language acquisition and inconsistent school practices in securing the best possible ELL model complicates the matter for both students and teachers.

The analysis also showed that ELLs are often referred for discipline, have low academic achievement and may have to repeat courses. A large majority of ELLs are struggling academically with many having to repeat a grade or needing to attend summer school. During the 2016 - 2017 school year, 37 out of 74 students failed one or more courses (Genesis, 2016 -17). This finding supports what studies have found that limitations in learning opportunities for ELLs can result in several negative outcomes, such as discipline issues, referral to special education, grade retention, and low academic gains (Sullivan, 2011). As mentioned by scholars and researchers in the field, ELLs have difficulty negotiating language, mastering content, and understanding the demands and expectations in the U.S public schools (de Schonewise Almanza & Klingner, 2012; García Bedolla, 2012). Therefore, it is imperative that school administrators use data to review current trends in the academic progress of ELLs. Such information could be used to evaluate ELLs program and implement appropriate academic, social, and emotional support throughout the school.

Preservice Teacher Education

The fact that the nation's teachers will encounter a diverse range of learners requires that every teacher has sufficient breadth and knowledge and range of skills to be able to meet the needs of all students, including ELLs (Samson & Collins, 2012). This is the challenge facing teacher education programs, to ensure that teacher candidates are well prepared to provide ELLs with the necessary instruction to help build their linguistic, social, and academic growth (Baecher, 2012). According to scholars and researchers (Fitts & Gross, 2012), field experiences and cultural immersion programs help preservice teachers develop a better understanding of the issues related to culturally responsive pedagogy. Studies conclude that teacher candidates who participate in study abroad programs develop greater empathy and understanding of diverse students and ELLs (Quezada & Alfaro, 2010; Polat, 2010; Medina et al., 2015). In these contexts, teachers gain the knowledge to make conscious decisions about the type of instruction to meet the needs of ELLs (Gay, 2010). Also, through shared interactions, preservice and in-service teachers become more culturally sensitive and develop empathy toward individuals from backgrounds different from their own. Once teachers are in the field, Sleeter (2012) notes that teachers can bring an awareness of diverse cultures with possibilities of relating to their students. Additionally, Brown-Jeff and Cooper (2011) and Bennett (2013) emphasize that ongoing professional development through integration of cultural experiences, values, and understanding of home culture into the teaching environments is essential for teachers to understand ELLs.

Concluding Comments

This study examined how teachers, administration, and counselor view their roles in working with ELLs. Additionally, it explored teachers, administrators, and counselor views on the challenges and benefits of working with ELLs. Although the literature contains several scholarly articles to assist schools in addressing the needs of ELLs, schools struggle in meeting their academic, social, and emotional needs. It is well documented that teachers and schools struggle to support the needs of culturally diverse students (Sailes, 2008), in particular, ELLs (Heineke et al., 2012). Teachers, administrators, and the counselor indicated several improvements that could be made in the learning and teaching at this school for ELLs which includes: resources, bilingual textbooks, inclusive practices, and professional development. This research makes explicit that Star Gate High School needs to devote more time in making ELLs a priority. The teachers desired to help ELLs in understanding content, however, the lack of professional development made teaching ELLs a challenge. The study showed the importance and need for teachers to engage in continuous professional development about meeting the needs of ELLs. Based on this, school administrators need to ensure that teachers receive adequate ongoing professional development.

It is my hope that my analysis and interpretation of the findings from this study could inspire other schools (teachers, administrators, and counselors) to create a school-wide culture of inclusivity where all students are afforded the same access and an equitable education. I would also hope that everyone reflects on and is encouraged to engage in social justice and advocacy for ELLs. Further research could focus not just on

the individual roles that administrators, teachers, and counselors play in working with ELLs but in how they connect to the success of ELLs academic experience.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Doctoral Study: How do teachers, administrators, and counselors describe their roles in working with English Language Learners?

Time of Interview:

Date: Location:

Interviewer: Position of Interviewee:

Brief description of the study:

IQ 1 - What is your current position at the school?

IQ 2 - How many years have you been at your current position?

IQ 3 - How long have you been working in the school district?

IQ 4 - What degree and type certification do you hold?

IQ 5 - Tell me out the demographics of the school? How has it changed?

IQ 6 - What role do you think schools play in the academic/social development of ELLs?

IQ 7 - Tell me about an experience you have had with an ELL?

IQ 8 - Tell me what is it like to work with an ELL?

IQ 9 – What do you see as the biggest challenges in working with ELLs?

IQ 10 – What do you think is the greatest benefits ELL students bring to our classrooms? Our school?

IQ 11 – What do you think it is like to be an ELL in this school?

IQ 12 – Can you tell me a bit about your thoughts on the best ways to work with ELLs?

IQ 13 – What has been your experience in accessing resources, supports, or training in your school for ELLs? How about at the district level?

IQ 14 - When you hear the work “social justice” what comes to mind?

IQ 15 - What support structures are available to ELLs in the school?

Appendix B

Consent Form

You have been invited to participate in a research study about how teachers, counselors, and administrators describe their role with English language learners. Please read this form and ask any questions before agreeing to be interviewed.

This interview will be conducted by Myrtelina Cabrera, a doctoral candidate at Rowan University.

Background information:

This study is being conducted to learn more about how teachers, counselors, and administrators describe their role in working with ELLs. The intent is to gain rich information that could assist the school in developing inclusive practices that could advance the academic success of ELLs in a school setting.

Procedures:

If you agree, you will be asked to participate in an audio-recorded interview, lasting 30-45 minutes.

Voluntary Nature of the Interview:

Your participation in this interview is voluntary. This means that you may withdraw from being interviewed at any time during the study. If you agree to be interviewed at this time, you can still change your mind later. If the interview makes you feel uncomfortable, you may stop at any time. You may also skip questions that you feel are too personal.

Risks and Benefits of Participating in this Study:

There are no potential risks to participants. You may skip any question you don't want to answer and withdraw for the study at any time without consequences. The benefits of this interview will help the school work toward enhancing their role in working with ELLs.

Compensation:

There is no compensation for participating in this interview.

Confidentiality:

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. Your comments will not be used for any purpose beyond the purpose of this study. Also, the researcher will not include your name or any other information that could further identify you in any of the reports.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher's name is Myrtelina Cabrera. The dissertation chair is Dr. Beth Wassell. You may ask any questions at this time. If you have any questions later, you may contact the researcher via (267) 972-1461 or the instructor at Wassell@rowan.edu.

The researcher will provide you with a copy of this form to keep.

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE

I have read this entire form, or it has been read to me, and I believe that I understand what has been discussed. All of my questions about this form or this study have been answered.

Subject Name: _____

Subject Signature: _____

Signature of Investigator/Individual Obtaining Consent:

To the best of my ability, I have explained and discussed the full contents of the study including all the information contained in this consent form.

Investigator/Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____